

THE MOVING OBJECTS OF THE
LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY
An Experiment in Symmetrical Anthropology

by

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A thesis submitted to the
University of Birmingham
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
February 2012

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Abstract

An experimental attempt to consider the history of the London Missionary Society (LMS) from the lens of the artefacts that accumulated at its London headquarters, which included a museum from 1814 until 1910. The movement of these things through space and over time offers a rich perspective for considering the impacts on Britain of its history of overseas missionary activity. Building on anthropological debates about exchange, material culture, and the agency of things, the biographies of particular objects are explored in relation to the processes involved in the assemblage, circulation and dispersal of the LMS collection. Methodologically, the research is an attempt to develop what Latour has called a symmetrical anthropology, with archaeological approaches to the material products of historical processes as an important dimension of this. Drawing on attempts to study 'along the grain' in historical anthropology, and to move beyond iconoclasm as a critical stance, it is argued that museums should be understood as 'other places' in which objects are made by techniques of inscription and confinement which have a significant ceremonial dimension. At the same time, certain charismatic objects are shown to have transcended these contexts of confinement, affecting those they encounter, and shaping history around themselves.

For Joey, who has loved but never shown her tears

In their material and formal properties, and in the ways people have responded to those properties, words and things have an incorrigibly historical dimension. They are in constant motion.

Webb Keane (2007: 5)

Christian Moderns: freedom and fetish in the mission encounter

Acknowledgements

I owe debts of gratitude to the many people who have made this research possible. Not least among them are Chris Gosden and Wendy James who in 2006 provided references in support of my application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which supported my research with a postgraduate award (no. 126750).

For assistance with my research, I am especially grateful to Jo Ichimura and Keri Myers at SOAS, but also to Margaret Thompson at Westminster College and Fiona Colbert at St. John's College in Cambridge, and to Alma Jenner at Mansfield College, Oxford. I have depended on the work of teams of librarians at the British Library, Cambridge University Library, the Bodleian, but especially the Cadbury Research Library and the Orchard Learning and Resource Centre in Birmingham, who seemed to have an inexhaustible range of missionary publications in the stacks. Mark Dickerson at the Pitt Rivers Museum library has been very understanding about my tendency to hang on to his books for ages. I owe a particular debt to Jill Hasell at the British Museum for making her transcriptions of documents available to me, but also to Jim Hamill at the Centre for Anthropology for providing me with access to a wide range of material. I was assisted to see material in the BM stores by Imogen Laing, Cynthia McGowan and Nina Harrison. Sherry Doyal was also very supportive in my attempts to uncover the traces of old labels. Elin Borneman was understanding about my requests to see yet more objects at the Pitt Rivers Museum, and Helen Merrett was especially helpful at the Horniman Museum. Len Pole and Carolyn Wingfield made my visit to Saffron Walden Museum fruitful, and John Clarke was a great help at the V&A. Chris Philipp most generously gave up days of his time at the Field Museum, and John Terrell was a very welcoming host, even if he did announce at the last minute that he wanted me to give a presentation on my research!

I am extremely grateful for the regular opportunities I have had to present versions of some of these chapters at seminars and conferences. This work had its first public outing at a symposium in Bergen in 2008, and I am very grateful to Hilde Nielssen for the invitation. I also enjoyed being part of a workshop at the BM and NMM in 2009, and am grateful to John McAleer and Sarah Longair for involving me. Thanks also to

Richard Vokes for inviting me to talk about English photographs in Oxford in 2009, a paper which ended up being about a bridge in South Africa! Rosemary Seton and John Stuart gave me the opportunity to present a paper at the Institute for Historical Research seminar on Christian Missions in Global History, a very stimulating experience. David Wengrow and Mike Rowlands gave me a slot at the UCL Centre for Museums, Heritage and Material Culture seminar, and I am grateful for their comments, but also to Ludovic Coupaye and Anne Haour for their questions. Mike O'Hanlon gave me the opportunity to think about my research in terms of trade for a workshop at the Pitt Rivers Museum, and Lotten Gustafsson to reflect on secular frames and sacred matter in Stockholm, both of which came at just the right time while I was working on my final chapters. I was also grateful for the opportunity to think about my research as a whole, and make this accessible to a general audience at the Saffron Walden Museum, and to Carol Law for her invitation and appreciative thanks. Thanks also to Candace Greene and the Council for Museum Anthropology for giving me the opportunity to convene a double session at the AAA conference in New Orleans, and to all the participants who contributed to my session on the 'Circulation of Museum Objects'. Not least among these was Steve Hooper, whose input as discussant I really appreciated. Possibly the best opportunity I have had to reflect on and develop my ideas was provided by an Advanced Seminar at the SAR in Santa Fe, which was a rare period of calm and reflection during 2010. I am extremely grateful to the convenors, Rodney Harrison, Sarah Byrne, Robin Torrence and Annie Clarke for the invitation, and to Tony Bennett for responding to my paper, even if it did contain an unauthorized borrowing of his exhibitionary complex idea.

As well as these formal settings, my research has also benefited enormously from a range of stimulating conversations. Sandy Brewer made time to talk to me after a seminar in Cambridge at an early stage in this research, and I was very engaged by Jeffrey Sarmiento's artistic experiments with ethnographic artefacts. I spent a very enjoyable afternoon in New Orleans talking to Erin Hasinoff, and had an engaging lunch with Anne Isaac at the British Library. I am very grateful to Lucie Carreau for sharing what she knew about Beasley, and to Rod Ling who told me about Spring Hill

College over a cup of tea in our local cafe. Hermione Waterfield and Bob Hales both generously looked into their notes for me. Thanks also to Jean Comaroff, who found time in her busy schedule to meet me when I was in Chicago, and to Ann Stoler who chatted with me after her CRASSH seminar in Cambridge. I am extremely grateful to Natasha Eaton for sharing her own unpublished research on the LMS museum, and to Steve Hooper for the interest he has shown in my work, and for sending me his 'Life of A'a'. I also benefited enormously from engaging with his colleague Margit Thofner at UEA, though I think the fruits of that conversation have yet to bloom.

A number of former colleagues at the Pitt Rivers Museum have provided support that goes far beyond the academic and practical, not least among them are Alison Petch, Jeremy Coote and Chris Gosden. Peter Mitchell has been a source of advice and encouragement since we met at an open day in 1996, and Dan Hicks continues to be a stimulating interlocutor. In Birmingham, Stephen Pattison agreed to act as my academic advisor, and Werner Ustorf played the role of *Doktorvater* magnanimously, for at least some of the last six years. Martin Stringer has given up a great deal of his time over the last two years to read and respond to early drafts of this work, many of them only partially formed. His comments, sometimes of scepticism or disagreement, have been an important stimulus. Last, but of course not least, I am extremely grateful to my family, and especially my wife, for recognizing my need to do this. My parents, as well as my parents-in-law, have been extremely generous in their support in all sorts of ways. My children, Jacob and Freddie, who have joined the family since I started this research, have been extremely patient about their father's ongoing preoccupation with it.

Preface

This thesis has been a while in the making. This is partly a consequence of the practical complications of arranging a satisfactory personal and family life, but it is also because the project involved attempting to reconcile a number of fairly idiosyncratic concerns. These are not necessarily explicit in the text that follows, but I will attempt to briefly outline some of the biographical events from which my interest emerged. They are by no means the defining context for what I have written, but they are perhaps a suitable pre-text. As I remember it, there were a number of events - disconnected moments of contact with particular things that sparked areas of curiosity.

At a birthday party when I was 6 or 7, I was given an illustrated children's book about the British settlers who were sent to live on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony in 1820. I remember looking at a picture of a missionary preaching under a tree as my mother told me that he was my ancestor. I remember connecting this to the people I would see carrying their bibles to prayer meetings in the veldt that surrounded our home in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. What I most recall about Sundays was the sound of singing.

At the age of eight I was transplanted to a village in south Cambridgeshire, and apart from the occasional visiting South African, life on the edge of the veldt felt very remote. The religious history I was taught at my Methodist school in Cambridge concentrated on John Wesley's travels around the British Isles, with little hint of their global impacts. That said, I do remember staring in curiosity at a leather plaque that hung on the wall in a room where detention was held which had been presented by Fijian old boys.

Shortly after I began my first degree, I travelled by train from Cape Town to Bulawayo. An elderly Zimbabwean I shared the carriage with told me that Africans had become like the people who conquered and ruled them, which was not the sort of anthropology I was learning in Oxford. A few years later, researching ostrich eggshell beads at a former mission in the Kalahari, I was asked by a Bushman friend whether it was really true that there were people in Europe who didn't believe in god, unclear what this would mean in practice.

Later, I had a similar conversation with an aboriginal woman at a former mission in Arnhem Land while researching a collection made by the anthropologist Donald Thomson in northern Australia. She spent some time impressing on me the radical changes that Christianity had brought, not least in relation to the personal safety of women. I was intrigued to later come across an entry in Thomson's published diaries where he complained that he could only collect a few spears because the local missionaries had visited the area before him (Thomson and Peterson, 1983: 61). The title of a book published by one of these missionaries *Spears to spades* (Webb, 1938), seems to suggest that they were attempting to reduce violence by buying up the weapons.

When I was employed at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery I became responsible for a gallery with an effigy of a missionary collector, Ida Wench, at its centre. I learnt from the work of Nick Stanley that she had amassed much of her collection through gifts received from pupils, as well as by paying them for craft products so that they had money to put in the collection plate (Stanley, 1989).

What really captured my interest in Birmingham, however, was a pair of napkin rings. I had grown up using a napkin ring, but had never encountered one in the homes of my English friends. The fact that there were napkin rings among the collections made by a Baptist missionary in the Congo, as well as by a high church Anglican in the Solomon Islands, implied that while missionaries had taken such features of bourgeois English civilization with them to other parts of the world, these had fallen out of use at home.

This research began as an ambitious attempt to compare the contents of different missionaries' collections, and to consider how these were affected by questions of religious denomination, historical period, gender, and the part of the world in which they worked. I quickly realized that the vast scale of the museum collections and archival resources available meant that to come to any reasonable conclusions would mean examining so many collections that it became a virtually impossible task. I also discovered that only rarely did a missionary give their whole personal collection directly to a single museum.

It became clear that collections were filtered by a range of processes between the time they were collected by missionaries "in the field", and their arrival at

museums. Without an understanding of these processes, examining collections as they currently exist could only provide very partial information about what was going on when things were originally collected. Having been convinced by reading Collingwood (1946: 9) that I should ask questions and try to answer them, rather than collecting what is already known and arranging it into a different pattern, I attempted to fasten on what I did not know and attempt to discover it.

I decided to concentrate on the London Missionary Society because of their involvement in southern Africa, but also because they had established a museum in 1814. Although I spent most of my time trying to track down objects from the LMS collection, or finding references to their museum or exhibitions in archives or publications, when I started to write I realized that wrapped around this seemingly straightforward historical detective work were a number matters of concern that emerged from my responses to writers whose work had made a distinct impression me.

While I have tried to provide references to most of them in the text that follows, it is perhaps worth acknowledging that what I have written is my attempt to respond to questions and arguments in ways that are not always captured by the formalities of the Harvard system. It will be obvious from the number of times he is cited that I find the work of Bruno Latour compelling and stimulating, but possibly less obvious that my reading of his work is shaped by Collingwood's conception of history as a science. The influence of Mauss runs like a warp string through what I have written, but further back there is Tylor, whose work is the wellspring from which I think Mauss drew, but also Lévi-Strauss who picked up where these two left off.

Although the impression left on me by many these anthropological ancestors has been mediated by their texts, the container in which many of my ideas have grown has been the Pitt Rivers Museum. While it is an institution that has been shaped by many chains of agency, spider-like at the centre of these is Henry Balfour, who spent his life building its collection. I have learnt the importance of experiments in writing from both Gregory Bateson and Alfred Gell, but it is to Mary Douglas, the first anthropologist whose work I read, to whom I owe the form this particular experiment has taken. It is to her thinking in circles that I find myself returning again and again.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|------|--|
| BM | British Museum |
| CMS | Church Missionary Society |
| CWM | Council for World Mission |
| CCWM | Congregational Council for World Mission |
| LMS | London Missionary Society |
| PRM | Pitt Rivers Museum |
| SOAS | School of Oriental and Africa Studies |
| V&A | Victoria and Albert Museum |

For abbreviations of archive and manuscript sources, as well as LMS publications used in footnotes, see these sections of the bibliography

Prologue

On 18 November 1839, the London Missionary Society Ship anchored off the island of Tanna, in what was called the New Hebrides and is now Vanuatu. The Camden had set sail from Gravesend in April the previous year, the tangible outcome of a charitable fundraising campaign that had seen the Rev. John Williams lobbying across the British Isles for four years. Intent on expanding the missionary effort into the western Pacific, Williams planned to establish three Polynesian Christian teachers on the island. Going ashore, a group led by Williams found the people friendly and keen to trade. The teachers were presented to three local chiefs, and the missionary party was given a pig, some yams, bananas and cocoa-nuts. In return, they 'made presents of some trifling articles' (Prout, 1843: 572). The chiefs then showed them a plantation as well as a *marae* (ceremonial enclosure), which housed a banyan tree they were told was *tapu* (taboo or sacred). When they arrived back at their boat, a crowd of people had gathered on the beach and were reluctant to let them return to their ship. They had come from different parts of the island with goods they were anxious to exchange for fish-hooks. It was agreed that the Polynesian teachers would spend the night on the island, and that two islanders would stay on the Camden. Arriving on the beach in the morning, the missionaries found the people had arranged themselves into groups with yams, bananas and cocoa-nuts to exchange. Having landed the possessions of the teachers, which they announced to be *tapu*, Williams and the missionary party went among the different groups, sitting down with each of them to exchange vegetables for calicoes, scissors and fish-hooks. With the teachers established in their new home, the Camden sailed to the neighbouring island of Erromanga.

The next day, a group of men from the ship approached the shore in a whale boat. They included John Williams, James Harris - a recruit for missionary service on his way to London, W.C. Cunningham, - British Vice-Consul in Samoa, as well as Captain Morgan of the Camden with four of his sailors. They came across three local men in a canoe and attempted to persuade them into the boat by giving them presents. Unsuccessful, the party rowed on towards the shore where they encountered other men who signalled for them to go away. Undeterred, the missionaries threw beads onto the beach, enticing their observers to come nearer, when they gave them more beads, fish-hooks and a small mirror. Receiving fresh water and coconuts in return, they were encouraged. Harris left the boat and waded ashore. Those on the beach responded nervously, and the missionaries noticed that there were no local women among them. Williams decided to follow Harris, handing out sections of red cloth to those near him. Reassured, Cunningham followed the others up the beach where he found a number of shells. Noticing they were of a species he hadn't seen before, he was putting them into his pocket when he heard Harris yell and saw him rush out of the bush ahead. Shouting to Williams to run, Cunningham made his own way back to the boat, but saw Harris fall into a small river where he was clubbed by a number of men.

Captain Morgan had been following the others up the beach when he heard his crew calling him back. They had seen Williams and Cunningham running and heard a conch shell being blown. Cunningham managed to reach the boat at the same time as Captain Morgan, but Williams ran directly into the water, intending to swim. Tripping on the stony beach, he was struck with clubs and shot with several arrows. When Morgan attempted to bring the boat towards Williams' body, arrows

and stones hailed down on them. With no firearms on board, the crew urged a retreat. From the Camden, Morgan could see Williams' body through his telescope, still on the beach and stripped of its clothes. Approaching in the ship, Morgan ordered an unloaded canon to be fired in an attempt to retrieve the body. This only brought the Erromangans back onto the beach, and they carried Williams' body away. When the Camden reached Sydney on 30th November, widespread outrage at Williams' death saw a British warship, the H.M.S. Favourite, despatched to Erromanga. Captain Croker, with the might of the British navy behind him, demanded and received the remains of Williams and Harris. These were taken to Williams' wife in Samoa, where his burial was attended by the crew of the Favourite. Croker had his marines fire three times over Williams' grave, and himself penned an epitaph:

Sacred to the memory of the Rev. John Williams,
Father of the Samoan and other Missions, aged 43 years and 5 months,
who was killed by the cruel natives of Erromanga, on Nov. 20th, 1839,
while endeavouring to plant the Gospel of Peace on their shores.

(Prout, 1843: 589)

Chapter 1

Introduction

Historical Artefacts & Artefactual Histories

Inde etiam habitus nostri honor et frequens toga; paulatimque discessum ad delenimenta vitiorum, porticus et balinea et conviviorum elegantiam. Idque apud imperitos humanitas vocabatur, cum pars servitutis esset.

Tacitus, Agricola¹

In 1841, the London printer George Baxter published a pair of images. These showed the final days of John Williams, the most famous missionary of his day (see Plates 2 & 3), depicting events that had taken place on the neighbouring islands of Tanna and Erromanga in November 1839. By comparing Baxter's published image of Williams' death on Erromanga (Plate 3) to a watercolour made in preparation (Plate 4), Bernard Smith has shown that Baxter deliberately made the Erromangans darker in complexion and the missionary 'more heavenly' in order to 'suggest the saintliness of Williams and the spiritual depravity of his murderers' (Smith, 1960: 245).

Nevertheless, in arguing that Baxter's depiction of Williams' death at Erromanga could be understood as representative of missionary presentations of the 'ignoble savage', 'a squat, swarthy, highly emotional type of being completely lacking in any personal dignity' (1960: 244), Smith ignored the image that had originally been published alongside it, that of Williams at Tanna (Plate 2). In this, a barefoot Polynesian in trousers and a shirt stands on a plank linking the dry land to the

¹ Book 1: 21. Describing the ancient Britons, Tacitus suggests: Hence, too, a liking sprang up for our style of dress, and the "toga" became fashionable. Step by step they were led to things which dispose to vice, the lounge, the bath, the elegant banquet. All this in their ignorance, they called humanity/refinement/civilization, when it was but a part of their servitude.

missionary boat, gesturing towards Williams while looking at a local chief. Williams is shown standing at the front of the boat 'with his hat in hand, waiting for permission to land' (Lewis, 1908: 100). When the two prints are placed alongside each other (see Plate 5), although the scenes unfolding on the beaches are quite different, the outline of the coast and mountains in the background suggests a lateral symmetry. Indeed, the two prints were created to be displayed alongside each other, and the image of Tanna suggests an alternative possibility for events at Erromanga. Baxter himself referred to the relationship between the two images as a 'melancholy contrast', with the same boat, 'natives' and Missionary, 'but alas! In how changed a position' (Lewis, 1908: 100). By drawing attention to this pair of images, my intention is to explore the different ways in which overseas missionary activity has been imagined in Britain. While the image of Williams at Erromanga is suggestive of missionary activity as an unwelcome intrusion, his arrival at Tanna depicts it as an essentially benevolent activity that was locally welcome. Although both popular and scholarly opinions have shifted between these two perspectives at different points in time,² it seems important to recognize that they each involve idealized images. As such, they fail to capture the complex, messy and ambivalent interactions that took place in many different places during the long history of the British overseas missionary movement. In addition, however, such images are dominated by a perspective on missionary activity that is focussed on the arrival of Europeans in other places, rather than on what flowed back to Europe as a result of these encounters.

In showing that Bernard Smith concentrated on only one of two prints that were conceived, produced and sold together, I intend to suggest that a number of

² For some of the contributions to the recent scholarly debate about the history of British mission, largely among historians, see Cox (2004, 2008), Hall (2002), Stanley (1990) and Porter (2004, 1990).

recent scholarly accounts have been somewhat selective in their focus on missionary images involving elements of deliberate distortion. Nevertheless, rather than promoting a benevolent image of missionary activity through a focus on Baxter's depiction of Tanna, I propose to understand both images in relation their production and circulation in Britain. Here they served to promote missionary activity, but also to create particular forms of knowledge about other parts of the world. This focus on the function of images owes a great deal to Alfred Gell's proposals for an anthropology of art (Gell, 1998: 3), but I also intend to draw on work in Science and Technology Studies which has emphasized the importance of attending to the manner of representation, rather than simply evaluating representation (Latour, 1987: 72).³ Rather than considering the accuracy of these images as depictions of life in other parts of the world, I propose to locate them in relation to the contexts in which and for which they were made, and the purposes they were created to fulfil. This thesis is not primarily an attempt to understand overseas encounters involving missionaries such as John Williams, whether in the Pacific or elsewhere. Rather, it is concerned with the ways in which imaginings in Britain of overseas missionary encounters depended on the circulation of things from other parts of the world. While Baxter never travelled to the Pacific and his pictures therefore drew on conventional and stereotypical notions about its landscape and inhabitants, as Smith pointed out (1960: 243), they did draw on a close friendship with John Williams.⁴ When Williams returned to Britain from the Pacific in 1834, he brought with him a range of things. Baxter was

³ For a discussion of this distinction see Latour (2005a), especially pp.26-29.

⁴ When Williams sailed from Kent in the *Camden* to return to the Pacific in 1838, Baxter, by his own account, was one of the last people to bid him farewell (Lewis, 1908: 100). In a booklet that accompanied the prints of Williams' last days, Baxter stated that 'he could not better evince the sincerity of his regret for the loss of his friend than by dedicating his art and labours to perpetuate the memory of so estimable a man' (Lewis, 1908: 100).

commissioned to illustrate Williams' *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises*, published in 1837, and he created a number of illustrations of artefacts that were printed within the text of the book, as well as of Williams himself (see Plates 6, 32, 55 & 56).⁵

Ebenezer Prout, who also collaborated with Williams in the production of his book, remembered him bringing out cases 'of curiosities which he had brought from the islands' at social gatherings, and speaking at length about 'a singular medley of idols, dresses, ornaments, domestic utensils, implements of industry and weapons of war' (Prout, 1843: 479). In addition:

not infrequently, Mr Williams arrayed his own portly person in the native *tiputa* and mat, fixed a spear by his side, and adorned his head with the towering cap of many colours, worn on high days by the chiefs; and, as he marched up and down his parlour, he was as happy as any one of the guests whose cheerful mirth he had thus excited.

(Prout, 1843: 479-480)

In attempting to enable Britons to imagine the places from which he had come, whether in conversation, through his book, or by the creation of pictorial representations, Williams instinctively reached for these things as props, and wove the narratives he was creating around them. Following the success of this strategy between 1834 and 1838, Williams returned to the Pacific in the newly fitted out missionary ship *Camden* (See Plate 6).⁶ Baxter's familiarity with the artefacts Williams brought to London suggests that it may be significant that he depicted the Erromangans brandishing roughly carved clubs and wearing short grass skirts, barely covering their genitalia. By contrast, he showed the chief at Tanna wearing an

⁵ Williams' book was Baxter's first significant missionary project. Although most of the illustrations were monochrome woodcuts (see Plates 32, 55 & 56), Baxter was actively promoting his recent invention of colour printing and some versions of the book included a colour portrait of Williams as a frontispiece (Plate 6). The popularity of this image led his publisher, Snow, to suggest that Baxter make his illustrations available separately on a cardboard mount.

⁶ The first of Baxter's images that was not originally produced as a book illustration showed the *The Departure of the Camden* in 1838 (Plate 6). The posthumous prints of John Williams at Tanna and Erromanga (Plates 2 & 3) were also issued in this way (Baxter, 1841), though a share of the profits from their sale was given to a fund established for the support of Williams' widow.

elaborately wrapped bark loin cloth, with a white feather in his hair. This is surely suggestive of peaceful intentions, the finely worked club he holds lightly in his hand looking rather more like a sceptre, or mace of office, than an offensive weapon.

Just as Baxter drew on principles of symmetry to create a 'melancholy contrast' in his imaginings of Williams' arrival at Tanna and Erromanga, I intend to use symmetry to re-imagine the history of British overseas mission, not in terms of the travels of British missionaries to other parts of the world, but through the journeys taken by things that travelled in the other direction. Rather than focusing on a collection made by an individual such as John Williams, I will concentrate on the institutional collection accumulated by the London Missionary Society (LMS). Although Williams contributed a number of objects from the Pacific to this, it also included things from other parts of the world where the LMS were active, chiefly southern Africa, India, China, Madagascar, and later New Guinea and Central Africa. By charting the fortunes of this collection and the ways in which it was drawn upon and used, I propose to explore the changing priorities and 'objects' of the LMS itself. Since the object of my own research has been a collection, and its changing shape over time, I have not restricted my focus to material from any particular period or geographical area. Instead, I have approached the collection archaeologically, and have commenced my research with the traces that survive in the present. Having assembled these in the course of my research, I have attempted to reconstruct the collection's assemblage (Chapter 3), circulation (Chapter 4) and dispersal (Chapter 5), processes that have ultimately enabled certain elements of this collection to survive in the present. In attempting a narrative reconstruction of these processes, I

intend to contribute to developing a symmetrical perspective on British overseas mission, and its role in shaping the present.

Charity & Christianity

Baxter's pair of images (Plates 2 & 3) can be regarded as a visual source depicting a view on overseas mission that was taking shape in Britain at the inauguration of the Victorian age.⁷ The promotion of missionary activity entailed a necessarily ambivalent view of non-Christian peoples. On the one hand they had to be 'ignoble' in order to justify the need for missionary activity in the first place, but on the other hand they had to be 'noble' enough to be capable of receiving and appreciating salvation. Part of the visual symmetry that links Baxter's images relates to the sky in the top corner above the missionaries. This is suffused with bright light, suggestive of the imagery of darkness and light, popular in contemporary missionary rhetoric, which promoted overseas mission as a means of shedding light into darkness.⁸ By including cloth, mirrors and boxes of provisions in the boat at Tanna (See Plate 2, facing p.1), Baxter was able to connect this larger project of 'enlightenment' to the charitable gifts made by his British audience in support of missionary activity.⁹ Baxter seems to have imagined overseas missionary work as a form of charitable gift-giving. If the depiction of Tanna suggests welcoming acceptance, the image of Williams' 'massacre' at Erromanga shows the opposite: a

⁷ Indeed, Baxter's other major project at the time was a detailed depiction of the new Queen's coronation.

⁸ As part of an attempt to promote missionary activity among the ruling classes, Williams had suggested that: It will be a blessed day for our world, when the first nobleman's son, influenced by a spirit of piety, and constrained by the "love of Christ," shall devote himself to go among the heathen "to turn them from darkness to light." (Williams, 1837: 590)

⁹ Missionary activity was supported by financial contributions, but also by donations of goods, sometimes sent to individual missionaries, or even occasionally to prominent converts.

gift violently rejected. In his essay on *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss noted that while those involved in gift exchanges are in theory 'free agents', in practice they have an obligation to give as well as to receive: 'To refuse to give....just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war; it is to reject the bond of alliance and commonality' (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 13). The refusal by the Erromangans to receive the charitable advances of the LMS dehumanized them in comparison to their neighbours at Tanna, and this difference was visualized in Baxter's depiction of their physical appearance. According to Baxter's own description 'every countenance [is] expressive of the most diabolical malice and rage...they all seem intent on the work of death' (Lewis, 1908: 100). This suggests that Baxter regarded the Erromangans as motivated by satanic forces, demonstrating the importance of understanding the role of evangelical theological preoccupations in shaping British views of mission.

Reviewers of Williams' book suggested that it was 'a history of Gospel propagation, unequalled by any similar narrative since the Acts of the Apostles' (Prout, 1843: 475). Indeed, following its publication, Williams became widely known as the 'Apostle of Polynesia'. This terminology is not only suggestive of the degree to which biblical texts were a common point of reference in early Victorian Britain, but also of the ways in which they provided a template for contemporary action. Niel Gunson (1978) has suggested that during the first half of the nineteenth century many British evangelical missionaries, whom he described as *Messengers of Grace*, were preoccupied with a theology of atonement. They understood the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as a substitution for the sins of humanity, and when accepted personally, a substitution for the sins they committed prior to conversion (Hilton, 2008: 183). Accepting the gift of grace required a personal experience of conversion,

along with a sense of conviction that would lead to the subsequent transformation of one's actions. The biblical prototype for this was the experience of Paul on the road to Damascus. His acceptance of the gift of grace, as well as his subsequent efforts in proclaiming the New Testament, were the yardstick against which many British evangelical missionaries measured their own actions. According to the understanding developed in the letters of Paul, written at the time of the earliest Christian missionary journeys, grace was enacted through the sacrifice and crucifixion of Christ as a 'free gift' (Romans 5:18), through which the fall of Adam was reversed. While this gift did not require reciprocation, its acceptance involved adopting a similarly beneficent attitude towards others, enacted through forms of charitable action including missionary work. This understanding seems to have been shared by many early LMS missionaries, who generally had personal experiences of conversion, and were therefore anxious to demonstrate the genuineness of their experience of salvation through their subsequent actions, to themselves as much as to others.¹⁰

In his essay on *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss (1990 [1923]: 18) regarded almsgiving as a Semitic development of 'the ancient morality of the gift' which subsequently spread around the world with Christianity and Islam. He suggested that generosity becomes an obligation when 'The gods and the spirits accept that the share of wealth and happiness that has been offered to them and had been hitherto destroyed in useless sacrifices should serve the poor and children' (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 18). Nevertheless, this understanding of the Arab *sadaka* and Hebrew *zedaga* regards almsgiving as part of a reciprocal exchange relationship with God. It does not capture the close connection between Christian understandings of charity

¹⁰ See Weber's (1992 [1904]) discussion of the Protestant ethic.

and the unilateral dimension of the notion of grace or *charis* developed by Paul (Harrison, 2003). Paul's understanding of *charis* as a gift through which God pays the debts of sin, arguably owes less to what Mauss called 'the ancient morality of the gift' than to the Old Testament notion of Jubilee, a form of manumission in which relationships of property, debt and obligation were suspended.¹¹ Harrison (2003: 284) has suggested that Paul deliberately contrasted his theology of grace with earlier forms of religious contract and exchange. By emphasizing that the divine gift initiated a new covenant, superseding 'the law' as it previously stood, Paul showed that the 'ancient morality of the Gift' had been replaced. As well as contrasting the Christian relationship with God to the contractual basis of the Jewish Old Testament, Paul emphasized its difference to the reciprocal basis of Graeco-Roman religion, summed up in the phrase *do ut des*, ('I give that you may give') (Harrison, 2003: 284). While nineteenth century British evangelical missionaries, unlike Christian converts at the time of Paul, had not generally grown up as practitioners of either Jewish or Graeco-Roman religions, the forms of religious practice they encountered in other parts of the world nevertheless owed a great deal to the principle of *do ut des*, a formula that Mauss (1990 [1923]: 17) showed was also found in the Sanskrit *dadami se, dehi me*.

While bilateral exchange relationships can be characterized as relationships of alliance, in the way that this term is used in anthropological kinship terminology (Lévi-Strauss, 1969 [1949]), the relationship established by the gift of grace has rather more in common with a relationship of descent, in which goods are transferred unilaterally between successive generations. It is perhaps significant that missionary

¹¹ This connection was certainly made by evangelical supporters of the LMS during the nineteenth century. See Juvenile: September 1844, pp.78, 'A Spiritual Jubilee'

rhetoric connected Britain's obligation to send missionaries overseas with the arrival of missionaries in the British Isles generations previously.¹² Sending missionaries to other parts of the world could be understood as a way of passing on the gift of grace, received either personally, or by one's ancestors. Although relationships of unilateral exchange are generally imagined in benevolent terms from a parental perspective, they nevertheless involve casting the recipients as grateful children, a relationship suggestive of all the tensions and complexities identified by a century of psychoanalysis. However, the global dominance of Britain during the Victorian period made it possible for British Christians to regard overseas mission, as well as its recipients, in this way. This perspective is represented particularly clearly by *The Secret of England's Greatness* (Plate 7), an allegorical painting made in around 1863, showing an unspecified African chief receiving the gift of a bible from Queen Victoria. Like the prints made by Baxter at the commencement of the Queen's reign, this image makes visible some of the ways in which Victorian Britons imagined themselves and their empire - as divinely ordained with a providential function achieved through missionary activity.

Mauss noted that to be a giver of gifts who refuses to countenance receiving them in return is 'to show one's superiority, to be more, to be higher in rank, *magister*' (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 74). By contrast 'To accept without giving in return, or without giving more back, is to become client and servant, to become small, to fall lower (*minister*)' (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 74). Mary Douglas explicitly connected such

¹² Register: 1813, vol. 1, pp.1-10, 'An appeal, particularly to Churchmen, on the duty of propagating the gospel': CHRISTIANS! the obligation, which lies upon you to join in this sacred cause, is infinite....CHRISTIANS! *to whom, under God, do you owe all these blessings? You owe them to that man who was the first Missionary to Great Britain...*The obligation, which once was this conferred on you, you are called on now to confer on others. Every blessing which you now enjoy whispers, *Freely you have received, freely give.*' pp.7-8

asymmetrical relationships to the operation of charity in the foreword she wrote for a 1990 translation of Mauss' essay, noting that:

Charity is meant to be a free gift, a voluntary, unrequited surrender of resources. Though we laud charity as a Christian virtue we know that it wounds... What is wrong with the so-called free gift is the donor's intention to be exempt from return gifts coming from the recipient. Refusing requital puts the act of giving outside any mutual ties.

(Douglas, 1990: vii)

While propaganda images, such as those of Baxter and Barker, enabled the British public to imagine overseas missionary activity as a charitable 'free gift', this vision was not necessarily shared by either its recipients, or those charged with delivering it. Though Baxter's images of the events at Tanna and Erromanga represent an image of missionary activity that took shape in London, they were shaped around a number of eyewitness accounts from the Pacific.¹³ The details of these suggest that in practice the events at both Tanna and Erromanga involved a number of reciprocal exchanges. Missionaries gave beads, fish-hooks, scissors, knives, mirrors and cloth, all the products of Britain's industrial revolution, and themselves received food, water and a place to stay. An anthropologically informed reading of these details suggests while Europeans may have thought they were handing out 'trifling articles' (Prout, 1843: 572), these gifts were understood and responded to in a reciprocal manner, and this reciprocity extended to exchanges of humans as well things. Even the Erromangan chief who struck John Williams later explained that this violent act was itself a form of reciprocity since he was seeking vengeance for the murder of his son who had been killed by another group of Europeans (Prout, 1865: 78). Although missionary activity may have been promoted in Britain as charitable giving, and an

¹³ The account given in the prologue is also based on these.

opportunity to pass on the gift of grace, it seems that missionaries in the field necessarily became involved in reciprocal forms of exchange.

In addition, understanding missionary activity as a one-way charitable gift does little to account for the thousands of things brought to Britain by missionaries. A hint of the ubiquity of such collecting emerges from Cunningham's memory that he was picking up shells on the beach at Erromanga when he heard the unfortunate Harris cry out.¹⁴ While large missionary ships like the Camden transported missionaries to other parts of the world, where they kept them supplied with manufactured goods, they also brought unusual and interesting things back to Britain. Some of these began their lives as items of significant local value, but others, like the shells Cunningham picked up on the beach, were presumably regarded as 'trifling articles' where they came from. By transporting goods from one part of the world to another, missionary ships added value by increasing their rarity and therefore their desirability.¹⁵ While this was true in both directions, by focussing on the things brought to Britain, I intend to develop a negative mirror image of more established ways of imagining the missionary encounter, to use a now outdated photographic metaphor. As I have hinted above, our contemporary understandings of British overseas mission continue to be influenced by the ongoing potency of images, created for propaganda purposes during the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the distortions inherent in these images, like those involved in the depiction of Williams' death at Erromanga, appear differently when paired with an alternative perspective. By concentrating on the evidence of things, the 'moving objects' brought to Britain in

¹⁴ See prologue, p.2.

¹⁵ An appeal to the manufacturers of Birmingham and adjacent towns for 'hardware and other manufactures', prior to the first missionary journey in the Duff, 1796, stated: 'Such unfashionable or imperfect goods as are generally unsaleable in Europe, would, for this truly excellent service, be highly acceptable.' CWM/LMS/Home/Incoming correspondence, Box 1, 1795-1800: Little E. July 26.

the course of missionary activity, this thesis is an attempt to develop such a view. Just as Baxter was able to imagine the events surrounding Williams' death by consulting textual fragments and material objects that had been transported from the Pacific to London, I have been able to re-imagine the same events based on the evidence of artefacts that have been transmitted through time. While ships preserved their contents intact on journeys through space, museums and archives have enabled the passage of many of the same things through time.

'Melanesians', Museums & Modernism

My reliance on the evidence of material goods is not simply an outcome of the ravages of time and the absence of first hand witnesses. It is also a way of exploring a set of ideas about the power of nonhuman things that have concerned anthropologists since the earliest beginnings of the discipline (eg. Tylor, 1871). Over the last century, and particularly since the publication of Malinowski's (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, these ideas have come to be particularly associated with 'Melanesians', the dark-skinned residents of the western Pacific among whom John Williams met his death. In his essay on *The Gift*, written partly in response to Malinowski's book, Mauss declared that one of his central questions was 'What force is there in the thing one gives, which makes its recipient reciprocate?'¹⁶ At least part of the answer he began to assemble was that:

¹⁶ *Quelle force y a-t-il dans la chose qu'on donne qui fait que le donataire la rend?* In W.D. Halls translation (1990 [1923]: 3), this is rendered 'What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?'. Given the contemporary connotations of the words 'power' and 'object', I would prefer to think of this as a question about the force that is in things, and will refer to it in these terms in what follows. After all, Mauss did not ask a question about *la puissance dans l'objet*. See: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k93922b/f39>

Souls are mixed with things; things with souls. Lives are mingled together, and this is how, among persons and things so intermingled, each emerges from their own sphere and mixes together. This is precisely what contract and exchange are.

(Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 20)

This statement succinctly expresses a way of understanding the world that is now relatively common among anthropologists, yet in the context of Mauss' essay, it is ambiguous whether this represents a clarification of indigenous perspectives, or an analytical insight. Indeed, Mauss has been criticized in relation to his discussion of the Maori notion of *hau* as 'the spirit of things' for failing to understand an indigenous category, as well as for confusing this with an analytical position (Sahlins, 1974: 149, Sigaud, 2003). Nevertheless, this tension, between what might be called an emic perspective, and was once called 'the native's point of view', and an etic perspective, or the analytical position of the objective scientist, has been an extremely creative one throughout the history of anthropology. When Levi-Strauss (1969 [1949]) applied insights from *The Gift* to the analysis of kinship structures, and when Mary Douglas (1979) used similar insights to explore patterns of consumption in the Western world, they each blended these perspectives. These examples are suggestive of the degree to which such understandings of social processes can offer analytical traction when transplanted from the localities in which they originally developed.

In terms of Mauss' biography, *The Gift* arose from an earlier interest in sacrifice as a form of religious exchange (Mauss and Hubert, 1964 [1899]). He wrote the essay as an attempt to connect the exchange of goods to the origins of law and forms of contract. In many ways, the best way of understanding *The Gift* is as an attempt to explicate the forms of practice and discourse that surround these, and to develop these into something that approaches a coherent system of thought with

significant implications for contemporary morality and practice. As such, it has a great deal in common with a work of theology. If *The Gift* is theology, however, it is a theology of *do ut des*, and can be read as a counter-argument to Pauline understandings of grace and charity. While elements of Mauss' understandings are echoed in contemporary theological positions, such as John Milbank's (1995) 'Theology of the Gift' and the *ubuntu* theology of Desmond Tutu (Battle, 1997), the system of relationships explored in *The Gift* is essentially non-Christian, at least in a Pauline sense. Nevertheless, as 'one of the human foundations on which our societies are built,' gifts continue to be exchanged in all societies even if 'hidden below the surface' (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 4). While Mauss noted that 'we' live in societies that draw clear legal distinctions between rights in things and rights in people, as well as between gifts on the one hand, and obligations and services that are not freely given on the other, he nevertheless suggested that such distinctions are in fact 'fairly recent in the legal systems of our great civilizations', asking 'Have they not in fact practiced these customs of the gift that is exchanged, in which persons and things merge?' (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 47-48).

By exploring the biographies of the objects that formed part of the LMS collection, I am attempting to develop a reciprocal perspective on the exchanges and encounters involved in missionary activity. I am also attempting to develop a way of understanding these encounters that has been substantially shaped by the ideas of the people amongst whom a great deal of missionary and anthropological work has been conducted. Rather than exploring how well such ideas describe the lives of the people who express them, this thesis is an experiment to explore the fruitfulness of thinking about the history of a European society in terms "the force that is in things"

and the mingling of 'souls' with 'things'. As such, it has involved exploring the degree to which the LMS was constituted as a 'society' as much by its nonhuman property as by its human members. It has also meant asking whether the reciprocal principles of exchange that are recognized in what Mauss called 'archaic societies', provide a better framework for understanding the historical relations established by British missions than the unilateral notion of Christian charity. At the end of his essay, Mauss stated that 'rather than resolving a problem and giving a definitive answer', he was 'posing questions to historians and ethnographers, and putting forward subjects for enquiry' (1990 [1923]: 78). It is in this spirit that I draw upon *The Gift*, but it is also this spirit which has enabled Mauss' essay to be a fruitful source of inspiration for anthropologists since the time it was written (Sahlins, 1974: 149), even if some of the ways in which they have used it depart from the ideas he outlined (Sigaud, 2003).¹⁷

Following the publication of Chris Gregory's (1982) book *Gifts and Commodities*, one misreading of Mauss that gained a great deal of traction was the notion that economies could be divided between those based on gifts and those based on commodities. This understanding seems to have been significantly reinforced by the work of Marilyn Strathern, who deployed this dichotomy strategically, as an analytical "fiction" (1988: 7). Gregory (1997: 483) has suggested that he 'developed the logical opposition between gifts and commodities in order to try to understand the ambiguity of the historically specific situation of colonial Papua New Guinea' (Hart, 2007: 482-483). Largely through the influence of Gregory and Strathern's conceptual and analytical dichotomizing, this dichotomy between gift-economies and commodity-economies had begun to be referred to as the 'Maussian

¹⁷ The most recent productive use of Mauss' work has been by David Graeber (2001, 2004, 2011).

Model' by the mid-1990s (Carrier, 1995, Sigaud, 2003: 353). While Marilyn Strathern recognized that gift and commodity exchange frequently operated alongside one another, at least in contemporary Melanesia, she nevertheless argued that:

imagining that one might characterize a whole economy in terms of the prevalence of gift exchange as opposed to one dominated by commodity exchange opens up conceptual possibilities for the language that conceives of a contrast between them. Thus one can manipulate received usages of terms such as 'persons' and 'things' or 'subjects' and 'objects'.

(Strathern, 1988: 19)

This strategy was directed at 'building up the conditions from which the world can be apprehended anew' (Strathern, 1988: 19), and did not claim to be an accurate portrayal of either 'Melanesia' or 'Europe'. Indeed, Strathern's 'Europeans' more often than not appear to be anthropologists, and probably only really one anthropologist in particular. The connection between Strathern's mythical 'Europeans' and her own approach to anthropology is expressed particularly clearly in a paper on *Artefacts of History* which addressed European surprise at the lack of surprise shown by Melanesians after their first encounters. Strathern suggested that:

A European is likely to explicate any one relationship through reference to others, through his or her description creating systems by bringing different concepts into connection with one another. Above all, he or she will "make sense" of individual incidents by putting them into their social or cultural context: an encounter with strangers requires understanding in terms of the society from which the strangers come, as a happening must be interpreted as an event in history. One might imagine, however, that the Melanesian would understand encounters in terms of their effects. It is the effect which is created, and effects (images) are produced through the presentation of artefacts....They construct further artefacts, such as cargo cults or wealth transactions to see what the further effects will be. And the revelation will always come as a surprise.

(Strathern, 1990: 37)

Strathern went on to connect 'European' attempts to understand both events and artefacts in terms of their social or historical context to the modernist phase in anthropology, with its primary concern with 'approaching "others" through the

elucidation of “their” world views’ (Strathern, 1990: 37). As an example, Strathern suggested that ‘it is taken for granted that we study the significance which... artefacts have for the people who make them, and thus their interpretations of them’ (Strathern, 1990: 37), rather than either their material qualities or their significance for other people. Indeed, Strathern suggested that the modernist phase in anthropology was one in which the ‘study of material culture became divorced from social or cultural anthropology’ (Strathern, 1990: 37). At the same time, Strathern recognized that by giving ‘attention to the artefact *qua* artefact’ and displaying things aesthetically in a way that ‘minimises reference to wider social or cultural contexts’, museologists might be behaving more like ‘Melanesians’ than her ‘Europeans’ (Strathern, 1990: 39). She suggested that ‘Perhaps the museum that looks like an art gallery presents us with a certain analogy to the Melanesian construction of image’ (Strathern, 1990: 40), but she seems to have been unable to fully convince herself, suggesting that it was only a ‘*partial* analogy’ (Strathern, 1990: 40). Nevertheless, Strathern recognized the possibility that European scholars like herself might ‘extend our concept of artefact to performance and to event’ (Strathern, 1990: 40) - things with potentially surprising effects. However, she suggested that the ultimate point of doing this would be to ‘get a closer approximation to Melanesians’ idea [sic]’ (Strathern, 1990: 40) - thereby fulfilling the modernist understanding of the anthropological project to which she had herself drawn attention.

While Strathern’s essentialist dichotomizing was strategic and self-conscious, and acknowledged by her to belong to a modernist phase in anthropology that was already ‘culturally superseded’ (Strathern, 1988: 20), it nevertheless represented a late flowering of the ethnographic approach to anthropology that had been

established by Malinowskian functionalism during the middle part of the twentieth century, at least in Britain. In the same way, Mauss' essay on *The Gift*, originally published shortly after Malinowski's (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, represented a late flowering of a nineteenth century archaeological approach to anthropology, concerned with the development of civilization. Whereas an ethnographically driven anthropology of different 'cultures', or contexts (Strathern, 1990: 37), sought to understand human practice in terms of internal systemic logics, the nineteenth century approach to 'civilization', or 'culture' in the singular (Tylor, 1871), sought to understand human practices by relating them to a narrative of global historical development. For Mauss (2006), who had grown up in an age of empire, 'civilization' may have seemed an obvious object of anthropological study, just as he could hardly avoid reaching conclusions in *The Gift* that were of 'a somewhat archaeological kind' (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 4). Nevertheless, as empires declined and the world was re-organized around geographically bounded nation-states during the twentieth century, anthropologists increasingly came to imagine they were studying discrete human 'cultures'. While the archaeological approach of the nineteenth century developed around things, and resulted in vast museums where these could be studied and placed in relation to one another, the ethnographic mode of anthropological knowledge production was logocentric, generating libraries of book-length ethnographies. Since the political model of the nation-state developed from a linguistically derived conception of the nation, it is perhaps unsurprising that the ways in which human cultures were understood during anthropology's modernist phase also drew on linguistic models, whether this meant that 'cultures' were approached structurally (Lévi-Strauss, 1963) or 'interpreted' like literary texts (Geertz, 1973).

Nevertheless, for modernist anthropologists, who spent their time talking to and writing about people with their own ideas about the social and cultural processes in which they were involved, certain difficulties emerged from this underlying linguistic model. Were they simply describing 'emic' ways of thinking? Or were they promoting an 'emic' understanding to the level of 'etic' explanation? Could such 'emic' understandings really apply to contexts apart from the one in which they originally developed? It is surely significant that the terms 'etic' and 'emic' derive from the linguistic distinction between the phonemic and phonetic, and therefore refer to a model of culture as understood by practitioners, or else as described by observers, a tension that remains unresolved in the methodological terminology of participant-observation.

If Strathern's notion of the 'European' is based on a (particular) modernist anthropologist, then given the nature of disciplinary training in mid-twentieth anthropology, with its emphasis on long-term fieldwork, language-learning and the production of complex ethnographic texts (Stocking, 1983a), it is perhaps unsurprising that the Strathernian 'European' ended up having an overwhelmingly logocentric view of the world. Nevertheless, many anthropologists who have been trained since 'the decline of modernism' (Ardener, 1985) are less personally tied to a mode of production that essentially involves converting spoken words into written ones. As someone who has predominantly studied and worked with things, but nevertheless finds myself having to describe my research by constructing a long text that "makes sense" 'of individual incidents by putting them into their social or cultural context' (Strathern, 1990: 37), I suspect that I might be something of a hybrid 'Melanesian-Westerner' in Strathernian terms. Nevertheless, this thesis is an

experiment in analyzing missionary encounters in terms of what Strathern might call Melanesian ways of thinking, and as such is an attempt, like the one she made in *The Gender of the Gift*, to build up ‘the conditions from which the world can be apprehended anew’ (Strathern, 1988: 19). By attempting to treat the objects in the LMS collection as ‘artefacts of history’, I propose to consider them in terms of the power which resides in them, their capacity to generate surprising effects, as well as the ways in which they mingle with human souls. However, this approach is not a simple rhetorical inversion, and has the serious aim of attempting to explore the degree to which these are more analytically fruitful ways of understanding human practices than the logocentric understandings of distinct and different ‘cultures’ that developed during anthropology’s modernist phase. This also seems to be a way of taking seriously what is said by other people, whether they are Melanesians, Africans, Indians, Chinese, or non-anthropologically trained Europeans, since it recognizes that their claims about the world are ontological ones, made from coeval position in space and time (Fabian, 1983). This means that such claims cannot simply be dismissed as only making sense within a ‘culture’ or system of ideas that is separate from the observer. Anthropological approaches that emphasize the radical alterity of such claims, and the people that make them, risk becoming another way of situating other people in a context that is separate to that inhabited by the anthropologist, where they remain simply objects to be studied. By exploring claims about the “force in things” and their applicability to encounters involving objects that have moved through a range of geographical and historical contexts, this thesis is an attempt to respond to ‘Melanesian’ ideas as ontological propositions about a shared and coeval world.

The Possibility of Symmetrical Anthropology

By referring to Malinowski, Lévi-Strauss, Douglas, and Strathern, I have situated what I have written in relation to the dominant anthropological tradition in Britain during the middle part of the twentieth century. Unlike Strathern's *Gender of the Gift*, however, which self-consciously exploited the dichotomizing genre of modernist ethnography, I am not suggesting that this thesis straightforwardly forms part of that tradition. Instead, it relates most strongly to forms of anthropological writing that began to emerge around two decades ago. These developed partly in response to a rising disciplinary consciousness of the particularities of the modernist anthropological tradition (Ardener, 1985, 1987), and the arbitrariness of the particular forms taken by its literary productions (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) and fieldwork practices (Stocking, 1983b). As well as these essentially internal forms of disciplinary self-consciousness, anthropologists also became increasingly aware of critiques of the ways in which western knowledge practices were implicated in European imperial and colonial history (Said, 1978), as well as in the political processes through which the disciplinary forms of European modernity had been established historically (Foucault, 1970). A significant work that developed these critiques in relation to the practices of anthropology was Johannes Fabian's (1983) *Time and the Other*, which argued that the discipline's forms of writing and fieldwork combined to deny coevalness to 'the objects' of anthropological study, rhetorically allocating these to an-other time, which he referred to as *allochrony*. While one could understand these critiques as marking what Ardener (1985) called 'the decline of modernism' in anthropology, they also created the conditions for a particular moment of possibility,

when forms of writing and research were open to experimentation, and when the description of a non-european 'other' in a timeless 'ethnographic present' became increasingly hard to justify.

Of a number of books that exemplify this moment of possibility, there are three that in different ways are significant foundations for my approach: Jean and John Comaroff's (1991) *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Nicholas Thomas' (1991) *Entangled Objects*, and Bruno Latour's (1993 [1991]) *We Have Never Been Modern*. Each in their different ways attempted to overcome the asymmetrical ways in which Europeans and their 'Others' had been treated in a great deal of anthropological writing. These were books that I heard mentioned as an undergraduate in the late 1990s, and which I began to engage with during postgraduate work in the early years of the new millennium. They are books that have significantly shaped my thinking over the last decade, and this research has emerged at least partly as a response. Significantly, all three have had impacts that have extended beyond the relatively parochial world of anthropology as a discipline. The publication of the Comaroff's book has been described in *The American Historical Review* as a 'signal event in historical anthropology during the 1990s' and a 'challenge to both anthropologists and historians to rethink their understanding of the construction of modernity' (2003). Marilyn Strathern (1994: 1015) suggested that Thomas had succeeded in *Entangled Objects* 'in his intention to "disfigure" any anthropological project that imagines it is describing a stable culture'. Meanwhile, Latour's book has been described as 'a powerful attempt to build a new vocabulary, one that will enable us to redescribe our relations to ourselves, our language, and the nonhuman world' (Crawford, 1994:

580). I will briefly consider each book and the ways in which I have attempted to draw upon and develop its legacy.

The Comaroffs' book was the first volume of what was originally projected to be a series of three volumes, and had the subtitle 'Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa'. As a work of historical anthropology rooted in Marxist theory, in which the central theoretical concept was hegemony, it attempted to 'trace the process by which non-conformist Christian missionaries, among the earliest footsoldiers of British colonialism, sought to change the hearts and minds, the signs and practices, of the Southern Tswana' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991: xi). While it brought together a 'cast of characters' that included Africans as well as missionaries, the book nevertheless retained a focus on a particular ethnographic locale in southern Africa. Rather than attempting to understand this as a spatially bounded 'culture', as an 'ethnological island... without history' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991: xii), the Comaroffs set about considering the ways in which large-scale forces such as 'colonialism, globalization and the making of modernity' took shape there in distinctive ways. That said, the nature and identity of these forces was to a certain degree pre-determined, as was the directionality of their influence - the Comaroffs were not overly concerned with the degree to which missionary activity among the Tswana contributed to the development of modernity in Britain. There was also a degree to which, by casting Missionaries as the 'earliest footsoldiers of British colonialism', the Comaroffs took for granted the direction in which history subsequently developed, rather than attempting to understand (European) historical actors on their own terms. Nevertheless, as a significant contribution to the

anthropological engagement with history, and particularly because of its analysis of the role of missionaries in the making of the modern world, *Of Revelation and Revolution* has a significant place as one of the three books that have provided the foundations for this thesis.

Another is provided by Nicholas Thomas' book on 'Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific' (Thomas, 1991). This adopted a wider regional perspective, considering exchanges across the Pacific as a whole, and like the Comaroffs, Thomas emphasized the historicity of events in order to demonstrate that culture in the Pacific did not exist 'out of time' (Thomas, 1989). Whereas the Comaroffs tended to consider the impact of missionaries on the Tswana, Thomas attempted to consider 'mutual appropriation and unequal exchange on colonial peripheries' (Thomas, 1991: 3). He developed *Entangled Objects* as a critique of the 'Maussian Model' of exchange, but like Carrier he seems to have understood this largely in terms of the dichotomy between gifts and commodity economies established by Gregory, and developed by Strathern. Thomas argued that a full range of transactions should be considered 'instead of only those which accord with Maussian stereotypes of the gift economy' (Thomas, 1991: 4), but in the process ended up creating a model of exchange that had rather more in common with *The Gift* than this 'Maussian model'. Thomas attempted to approach exchange as a bi-directional process, and considered 'The Indigenous Appropriation of European Things' alongside 'The European Appropriation of Indigenous Things' in his third and fourth chapters. The history that he described was a material history, centred around the particular items that were exchanged. These were not content-less placeholders in abstract exchanges, but were understood to make a material difference to forms of

exchange as they unfolded. Thomas deliberately wrote about objects that were entangled in colonial histories as an attempt to overcome some of the problems of *allochrony* demonstrated by Fabian (1983). Nevertheless, there was a degree to which Thomas retained something of the modernist sense of distinctive ‘cultures’, or ‘contexts’, which rubbed up against one another during colonial relations. Things were more or less successfully contextualized, or in his words ‘appropriated’ by the participants in the exchanges he described. In his conclusion to the book, Thomas commented that ‘If there is one commonsense theory that this book has been directed against, it is this curious idea that artefacts are subjects rather than objects, things which produce or express cultural change while standing as fixed and stable entities themselves’ (Thomas, 1991: 208). Nevertheless, he concluded by arguing for the promiscuity of objects, suggesting that:

the outcomes of liaisons with artifacts cannot be predicted, there is a sense in which both positive ramifications and political damage can always run beyond initial expectations; it is perhaps this instability, historicity, and lack of historical containment that epitomizes the entanglement we all have with objects.

(Thomas, 1991: 208)

It seems that Thomas may have surprised himself in reaching this conclusion, a perspective that came very close to developing a conception of objects as ‘artefacts of history’ (Strathern, 1990) with the capacity to surprise and to produce cultural change.

Rather than attempting to consider the ways in which humans from a particular region of the world established long-standing historical relationships with Europeans, Bruno Latour approached the separation of ‘westerners’ and ‘the others’ from the perspective of his studies of western scientists and the historical development of Europe. Like Thomas, he was interested in the role of things in

history, but his things were instruments of science such as Boyle's air pump, rather than entangled objects from the Pacific. Latour's basic thesis was that scientific work depends upon the construction of hybrid forms that blend human and nonhuman elements, but that this work of mediation has been accompanied by a project of purification, in which the human and nonhuman, or nature and culture, have been emphasized as irredeemably distinct from one another. What Latour (1993 [1991]: 13) calls 'the modern constitution' consists of one great divide between nature and culture, humans and nonhumans, and another between 'Us' and 'Them'. For 'moderns', nature and culture are regarded as distinct, but they see the rest of humanity confusing these basic categories. Latour's book presented a diagnosis of modernity as a malady, as well as a prescription for its cure - to accept that 'we' have never been modern, and that 'we' too create networks that blend the human and nonhuman. The difference, according to Latour is that 'we' have learned to create longer networks, and 'the innovation of lengthened networks is important, but it is hardly a reason to make such a great fuss' (Latour, 1993 [1991]: 124). At a structural level, Latour's book is partly about the erection of boundaries, and the illicit and unacknowledged ways in which these are crossed. His analysis of the project of purification that accompanied the proliferation of hybrids complements the positions adopted by both the Comaroffs and Thomas. While modernist anthropology separated and reified 'our' distinctiveness, historical analysis could reveal long histories of engagement and interaction with 'Them'. While the Comaroffs suggested that this made it possible to explore the distinctive ways in which modernity took shape in Africa, Latour's position suggests that claims for the modernity of Europe have themselves been overstated. Latour proposed symmetrical anthropology as a

way to overcome the dual 'Great Divides' established by what he called the 'Modern Constitution' (Latour, 1993 [1991]: 103 & 113). Symmetrical anthropology should abandon the project of purification, and instead explore the processes of mediation and translation by which humans and nonhumans, as well as 'modern' Westerners and their others, become assembled into the hybrid assemblages that Latour called actor-networks. Methodologically, Latour suggested that by following the 'thread of networks of practices and instruments, of documents and translations', it should be possible 'to pass with continuity from the local to the global, from the human to the nonhuman' (Latour, 1993 [1991]: 121). Ultimately, this project of tracing networks and connections should result in more ontologically accurate descriptions of the world, in which human and nonhuman participants, as well as 'moderns' and 'others' can be treated in a symmetrical manner.

It is surely significant that each of these three books was originally published in 1991, two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In both his introduction and conclusion to *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour referred to 1989 as a miraculous year (Latour, 1993 [1991]: 8 & 145). A great deal of his project, like those of Thomas and the Comaroffs, involved pulling down similar walls, though mostly built from books and ideas rather than bricks. All three, albeit from different starting points, attempted to break out of the anthropological frameworks that contained African and Pacific cultures in isolation from modernity. The mood of the period is perhaps best captured by another book published in the same year, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* by Fredric Jameson. According to Jameson:

The last few years have been marked by an inverted millenarianism in which premonitions of the future, catastrophic or redemptive, have been replaced by senses of the end of this or that... taken together, all of these perhaps

constitute what is increasingly called postmodernism... As the word itself suggests, this break is most often related to notions of the waning or extinction of the hundred-year-old modern movement (or to its ideological or aesthetic repudiation).

(Jameson, 1991: 1)

This sense of something ending was also famously captured in Francis Fukuyama's (1992) book *The End of History and the Last Man*, published the following year. This was based around an article, originally published in Latour's miraculous year (Fukuyama, 1989), in which he drew on Hegel and Marx's dialectical conceptions of history to argue that liberal democracy, having conquered rival ideologies such as hereditary monarchy, fascism and communism, was the 'end point of mankind's ideological evolution' (Fukuyama, 1992: xi), an *ideal* that could not be improved on. Two decades later, this claim seems extraordinarily parochial, ignoring as it does the possibility for ideological challenges to arise from outside the European intellectual tradition.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it captures something of the pre-millenarian sense of possibility created by the end of the Cold War, and perhaps particularly by the iconic images of the fall of the Berlin wall. It is something of that possibility that I am attempting to rekindle here.

Modernity, Materiality & Missions

It is significant that the three books outlined above were primarily concerned with transformations of the world during the last two and a half centuries, processes referred to as 'The Dialectics of Modernity' in the subtitle to the Comaroff's second volume (1997). If, as Jameson suggested (1991: 1), the years preceding 1991 were marked by a waning of enthusiasm for twentieth century modernism - a movement

¹⁸ See Latour's (2005a) discussion of Fukuyama in his introduction to *Making Things Public*.

that embraced the aesthetic qualities of contemporary life, the succeeding years have been marked by a rising interest in modernity as an object of study, or at least critique.¹⁹ Frederick Cooper (2005: 7) has demonstrated a significant increase in the number of times 'modernity' was used as a keyword for articles published between 1993 and 2003, though this was not as significant as the increases he charted for 'identity' and 'globalization'. All three terms, he suggests, operate at one and the same time as terms of wider public debate and of scholarly analysis (Cooper, 2005: 8). Scholars clearly cannot help being influenced by the times and places in which they live, just as they can't prevent those who are not scholars from having ideas or expressing opinions on the distinctive features of the world in which they live. Indeed, if there is one unifying characteristic among the different ways in which both scholars and others have used the term modernity, it is to connote the distinctiveness of human life in the present and recent past. The precise time that modernity began is open to debate, as are the particular features that characterize it. Nevertheless, what most contributors seem to agree on, is that in some way or other the recent past represents a distinctive period in human history. It seems that over the last two decades, 'modernity' as a term has become closely associated with popular and scholarly exercises involved in defining contemporary identities, whether these are 'post-modern' or 'post-colonial'. A significant challenge for historical anthropology, when studying processes involved in shaping the world in which we live, is to do so in a way that avoids lapsing into generalities about the nature of 'modernity', 'globalization' or indeed 'colonialism' as generalized abstract nouns.

¹⁹ For a consideration of the connections of postmodernism to the study of modernity see the introduction in Comaroff (1993).

Critiques of modernity have been particularly associated with colonial studies, also a field of enquiry that has blossomed over the last two decades. An important strand of this work has been concerned with demonstrating the involvement of overseas colonial engagements in the constitution of modernity in Europe. This line of argument has been pursued in relation to missions through the work of Susan Thorne (1997, 1999, 2006) and Catherine Hall (2002, 2006). As well as exploring the ways in which Europe was made from its colonies, scholars have examined 'how the very categories by which we understand the colonies' past and the ex-colonies' future were shaped by the process of colonization' (Cooper, 2005: 3). This argument, associated particularly with Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), has suggested that a version of political modernity associated with the post-Enlightenment history of Europe has become idealized in the social sciences as the model against which historical and political developments in other parts of the world are measured, and generally found lacking. Chakrabarty's call for the 'provincialization of Europe' is a critique of the historicism that allowed the European experience to become a model for universal notions of development, thereby consigning other places to 'the imaginary waiting room of history' (Chakrabarty, 2000: 8). Nevertheless, Chakrabarty appears less concerned with understanding the particularities of European history, than with demonstrating the development of alternative modernities in other places. His argument suggests that the 'problem of capitalist modernity' is not a simple 'problem of transition, but also of translation' (Chakrabarty, 2000: 17), and he attempts to disrupt an assumed dichotomy between 'modernity' and 'tradition' by arguing for the development of divergent forms of modernity beyond Europe. While endorsing some aspects of this argument, Cooper (2005: 3) has expressed concern

that critiques such as Chakrabarty's tend to treat colonialism abstractly, and to juxtapose this with a 'flat' ahistorical vision of European 'modernity'. He has noted that 'the counterpart of reducing non-Western history to a lack of what the West had, is to assume that the West actually had it' (Cooper, 2005: 15-16). While arguing for alternative modernities is a way of asserting 'coevalness', and addressing the *allochrony* identified by Fabian (1983), deploying the notion of modernity at all nevertheless involves retaining elements of historicism, even if the intention is to de-centre a previously dominant Eurocentric version.

Reviewing the different ways in which the term 'modernity' has been used, Cooper (2005: 130) has suggested that scholars have labelled any notion of progress or improvement as 'modernity' regardless of how it was understood by those involved. The major issue for him is whether modernity serves any use as an analytical term, or whether it simply leads to confusions between contemporary frameworks of understanding and those deployed historically. According to Cooper (2005: 113), 'the word *modernity* is now used to make so many different points that continued deployment of it may contribute more to confusion than to clarity' and while it has been 'a concept that has played an important role in making claims' it now 'does little analytic work' (2005: 134). Latour's (1993 [1991]) argument that *We Have Never Been Modern* is perhaps helpful here. Just as anthropologists of religion tend to adopt a position of methodological atheism, and Gell has argued for the need for anthropologists of art to adopt a methodological philistinism (Gell, 1992: 42), Latour has suggested that it may be necessary to adopt a similarly sceptical position when studying phenomena involved in the shaping of the contemporary world, particularly with regard to claims for their historical distinctiveness. While Latour has suggested

that the 'innovation of lengthened networks' (1993 [1991]: 124) may be characteristic of recent centuries, it has equally been characteristic of many other periods of human history. Instead of labelling processes with terms such as 'modernity' or 'globalization', the challenge becomes to describe the mechanisms involved in these in a more precise manner. By tracing movements through lengthened networks, such as those created by the LMS, it should be possible to locate historical processes in relation to the particular circumstances in which they have taken place. Adopting a position of methodological non-modernism makes it not unreasonable to regard the 'modern' missionary work of John Williams and his contemporaries as an extension of the 'ancient' missionary journeys of Paul in the Mediterranean. At the same time, understanding and describing the mechanisms involved becomes more important than simply drawing attention to the expansion of Christianity as a feature of either 'globalization', 'colonialism' or 'modernity'.

Nevertheless, there is something that deserves consideration in claims for the radical and revolutionary distinctiveness of modernity. As a way of positioning the present as distinctive and radically transformed, claims to modernity function in similar ways to the claims developed by Paul during his early missionary work. The parallels between an understanding of modernity that is situated in opposition to previous history, and the Pauline understanding of the world as radically transformed by grace are too strong to be ignored. Indeed, Webb Keane has linked Latour's project of purification to what he has called 'the religious dimension of the concept of modernity' (2007: 23). According to Keane, the 'moral narrative of modernity' (Keane, 2007: 4), in which modernity is situated as 'the outcome of a story of moral redemption' (Keane, 2007: 24), owes a great deal to concepts and values of the

Protestant Reformation (Keane, 2007: 26). The attempted transformation of Europe in the name of modernity and the attempted transformation of the rest of the world in the name of Christianity are connected projects, and the processes involved deserve to be considered alongside and in relation to one another. Indeed, while modernity is a term that has had a recent vogue, 'civilization' was the one that was used more frequently in Britain during the nineteenth century, when its connections with Christianity were recognized, but also debated. The making of a civilized world and the making of a Christian world were connected, but at the same time perennially incomplete projects. While these projects have meant different things to different people at various times, they have nevertheless motivated the actions of a large numbers of people, and set in train processes that were directed at radically transforming the world.

In studying these processes and the transformations they brought about in practice, adopting a position of methodological scepticism becomes an important way of insulating one's 'native' prejudices either for or against such grand projects. An archaeologist working on the material remains of the ancient past has an advantage in this sense, since they frequently have less personal involvement in the processes they are ultimately attempting to understand and describe. The absence of language, or at least spoken language, in many archaeological contexts has allowed archaeologists to appreciate the role of material things in shaping human history. It is perhaps for this reason that many of those who have been most influential on re-focussing anthropological concerns around materiality since the late 1980s (eg.

Miller, 1987) received their early training in archaeology.²⁰ As someone who has also acquired an archaeological sensibility through my education, as well as a museological sensibility through my subsequent employment, I am intent on using artefacts as evidence from which to reconstruct something of the processes by which missionary activity re-shaped the world over the last two centuries. I do not intend to use material evidence to argue either for or against the radical distinctiveness of modernity (although see Hicks, 2009), nor do I intend to make grand claims for materiality (Miller, 2005), a similarly general and abstract noun (Ingold, 2007). Things do not speak (Holbraad, 2011), and material culture cannot be read (Tilley, 1990), unless it is imprinted or impressed with words. Nevertheless, it is possible to learn from things by engaging with them in particular ways. While most children realize this long before they are six months old, it is an insight that is sometimes lost to those whose training in the humanities has arguably resulted in them learning too much of what they know about the world from printed texts. To learn from things, we have to be prepared to be surprised by them - to allow them to transform their contexts and to become agents in the making of history.

In 'The Case of the Misplaced Ponchos', Nicholas Thomas (1999) developed Marilyn Strathern's (1990) notion of 'Artefacts of History' to explore the history of cloth in Polynesia. Rather than emphasizing the indigenous appropriation of european things and the european appropriation of indigenous things as he had in *Entangled Objects* (1991), Thomas explored the involvement of bark cloth garments, known as *tiputa* or ponchos, in constituting 'new social contexts' through the creation of 'novel and distinctive values and social orders' (1999: 6). While *tiputa* may have

²⁰ For a discussion of the development of Material Culture, see Hicks (2010), and for a discussion of the more recent development of contemporary archaeology see Harrison (2010).

originated in Tahiti, they spread throughout Polynesia in the course of evangelization and conversion to Christianity. Thomas (1999: 16-17) suggested that through their adoption as 'Sunday best', *tiputa* became more than mere markers of new Christian identities, implying a new temporal order in which Church services functioned as 'theatres' for the display of persons, as well as opportunities for worship. *Tiputa* functioned as a 'kind of technology' that 'altered the being of the convert' by transforming their embodied practices and orientations. Nevertheless, *tiputa* were not things that were entirely alien to existing technological practices, or to ways of understanding wrapping as a practice of sanctification (Thomas, 1999: 18). Thomas suggested that *tiputa* could not be explained as 'materializations', or 'expressions' of a new context, but rather as technologies that transformed the context in which they operated. They were neither 'inventions of tradition nor wholly unprecedented forms', but functioned like metaphors, which have affinities with the terms to which they are applied, but are chosen 'because one wants to turn or twist meanings in a new direction' (Thomas, 1999: 18). While *tiputa* may have been used to 'change contexts' in the Pacific, it is striking to note that John Williams, who Thomas (1999: 14) showed to be deeply concerned with their use by converts, may also have used *tiputa* to 'change contexts' when he 'arrayed his own portly person' in one while engaging with supporters in Britain (Prout, 1843: 479). The travels of *tiputa* around, but also beyond the Pacific, suggest that as well as transforming pre-existing contexts through 'turning' and 'twisting' practices 'in a new direction' (Thomas, 1999: 18), artefacts also became involved in the expansion of contexts to encompass people living at great geographical distances from one another.

As well as changing temporal orders, forms of dress and modes of behaviour, missionary Christianity also transformed landscapes through the creation of chapels, classrooms and clinics. Indeed, Jeffrey Cox (2008: 112) has suggested that much of the work of British overseas mission can be understood as 'institution building'. As well as building institutions in other parts of the world, however, the *British Missionary Enterprise* also involved the creation of new institutions in Britain. While missions have been associated with the development of modernity in other parts of the world, through the work of the Comaroffs and others, so museums have been associated with the development of modernity in Europe (Lorente, 1998, Preziosi, 2003, Prior, 2002). The 'moving objects' associated with the collection of the LMS museum provide a way of exploring the connected development of missions and museums, both institutions that have been associated with 'modernity', having played significant parts in shaping the world in which we live. The history of the LMS collection suggests that, in contrast to some of the secular imaginings of the twentieth century, there were significant connections between museums as one of the characteristic institutional forms of European 'modernity', and missions, as institutions that have been associated with 'modernity' in other parts of the world. Instead of regarding them as belonging to alternative 'modernities' (Chakrabarty, 2000), the mobility of material objects between mission and museum provides a means of connecting these geographically distant phenomena, and allowing them to emerge as coevals that were equally involved in the creation of a global context through which Christianity was able to expand. In discussing *tiputa* as 'artefacts of history', Thomas has suggested that we should understand social life as 'a succession of gambles on the bad chance that things will be received in the spirit in which they were given'

(Thomas, 1999: 7). In constructing history, itself an artefact, we should therefore not presume that the ultimate outcomes of such strategies necessarily followed from the intentions of those involved. While John Williams may have had his mind set on transforming the Pacific, he may have contributed equally to the transformation of Europe.

Civilization and Collecting

While missionaries like Williams were concerned at the absence of Christianity in other parts of the world, they frequently seem to have been equally concerned at what they perceived as an absence of civilization. For many British missionaries, the civilizing mission was combined with, and no less important than the Christian one. Indeed, the only LMS missionary more famous than John Williams, David Livingstone, famously coined the slogan Christianity, Commerce and Civilization. This suggests that not only were these things regarded as missing from the places to which missionaries frequently went, but also that they were things that missionaries had to offer. Like the word 'modernity' in more recent times, civilization seems to have been a term which different people used to mean a range of different things, while at the same time agreeing with each other that Europeans had it and other people didn't. When the continental sociologist Norbert Elias set out to discover 'what this "civilization" really amounts to', on the eve of the second world war (Elias, 2000 [1939]: xiv), he concluded that:

The concept of "civilization" refers to a wide variety of facts: to the level of technology, to the type of manners, to the development of scientific knowledge, to religious ideas and customs. It can refer to the type of dwelling or the manner in which men and women live together, to the form of judicial punishment, or to the way in which food is prepared... But when one examines what the general function of the concept of civilization really

is, and what common quality causes all these various human attitudes and activities to be described as civilized, one starts with a very simple discovery: this concept expresses the self-consciousness of the West. One could even say: the national consciousness. It sums up everything in which Western society of the last two or three centuries believes itself superior to earlier societies or “more primitive” contemporary ones.
(Elias, 2000 [1939]: 5)

At the same time, Elias suggested that ‘civilization’ did not mean the same thing in all European languages, and while it was useful in German, it was secondary in importance to the term *Kultur* (Elias, 2000 [1939]: 6). By contrast, in English and French, “civilization”:

sums up in a single term their pride in the significance of their own nations for the progress of the West and of humankind... It refers to something which is constantly in motion, constantly moving “forward”... plays down national differences between peoples; it emphasises what is common to all human beings or – in the view of its bearers – should be.
(Elias, 2000 [1939]: 7)

In trying to account for what he perceived as the peculiarities of nationalism in England, Krishnan Kumar developed a model of what he calls ‘Missionary or Imperial Nationalism’, the key feature of which ‘is the attachment of a dominant or core ethnic group to a state entity that conceives itself as dedicated to some large cause or purpose, religious, cultural or political’ (Kumar, 2003: 34). This way of connecting national destiny to the missionary enterprise is suggestive of the prominence that missionary activity achieved in Victorian England, and even reminiscent of *The Secret of England’s Greatness* (Plate 7, facing p.13). Nevertheless, Cooper has warned that ‘Empires should not be reduced to national polities projecting their power beyond their borders’ (Cooper, 2005: 11) and has suggested that in attempting to ‘provincialize Europe’ by digging ‘more deeply into European history itself... there is no more central myth to be dissected than that of narrating European history around the triumph of the nation-state’ (2005: 22).

A great deal of what has been written about the history of museums in the nineteenth century has tended to situate them as institutions that arose in relation to the emergence of the nation-state. Sharon Macdonald (2003: 1), for instance, has suggested that 'The proliferation of museums in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly closely bound up with the formation and solidification of nation-states in, and subsequently beyond, Western Europe.' If Elias is right, however, about the ways in which a focus on the notion of civilization in Britain and France played down national differences, then we might expect museum histories in these countries to reflect this. Indeed, Elias also suggested that despite preferences for different terms in Germany, England and France, 'they all regard it as completely self-evident that theirs is the way in which the world of men as a whole wants to be viewed and judged' (Elias, 2000 [1939]: 7). This final point is crucial since it suggests that not only have the terms "civilization" and "culture" been central to the self-understanding of different European peoples, but that they have also had a significant impact on the ways in which they regarded the people they encountered in other places.

Macdonald argued that understanding the world as consisting of nations, with 'discrete, spatially-mapped, bounded difference' (2003: 2) could be associated with 'the representation of discrete cultures in exhibitions' in ways that were "cased in", so 'that traversing space meant encountering a succession of separate, if sometimes related, cultures' (Macdonald, 2003: 3). It is perhaps significant then, that museum displays arranged in this way were far more common in Britain during the mid-twentieth century than had been during the nineteenth century, when typological displays were more common. Indeed, displays of "cased in" cultures appear to have been contemporaries of the textual ethnographies created by modernist

anthropologists. By contrast, Arthur MacGregor (1998) has documented a considerable ambivalence towards 'national antiquities' during the mid-nineteenth century at the British Museum (BM), when the main focus for collecting was the ancient classical world. This was also reflected in the neo-classical building designed to house the collection by Robert Smirke, which opened in 1847. From 1851 onwards, *The Progress of Civilization* was depicted in stone above the main entrance, almost providing a key for how to understand what was to be found inside (see Plate 8).²¹

Although curators at the BM resisted collecting artefacts that were suggestive of a lack of civilization until the last third of the nineteenth century, whether these came from overseas or the ancient British past (Wingfield, 2011b), for missionary collectors, the opposite presumption appears to have been the case. The more that objects from other parts of the world suggested an absence of Civilization, the more they justified missionary activity. Michael O'Hanlon has drawn attention to one example of this preference through his detailed exploration of a peculiar object he described as a 'mixture of stringless tennis racket and garotte, the 'man-catcher'' (O'Hanlon, 1999: 379). In an attempt to develop Strathern (1990) and Thomas' (1999) insights on 'artefacts of history', O'Hanlon (1999: 379) explored the relationship between 'man-catchers' as artefacts and their historical contexts. The primary context O'Hanlon discussed was the south coast of New Guinea, between 1871 and the end of the nineteenth century. This involved engagements between the makers of 'man-catchers', LMS missionaries, traders (both European and Chinese),

²¹ George W. Stocking's *Victorian Anthropology* (1987) considers at length the salience of ideas of 'civilization' in Victorian England.

as well as colonial administrators following the establishment of the protectorate of British New Guinea in 1884.

While O'Hanlon pointed out that senior colonial administrators were sceptical about their practical usefulness, he nevertheless demonstrated that the standard reference point for subsequent accounts, including museum descriptions, was the account that had been given by the LMS missionary James Chalmers. According to Chalmers, before the arrival of missionaries, the 'Man-catcher' had been the 'constant companion of head-hunters', who 'lived only to fight' with victory 'celebrated by a cannibal feast' (1885: 251). That said, he happily pointed out 'All these things are changed, or are in the process of change. For several years there have been no cannibal ovens, no desire for skulls...' (Chalmers and Gill, 1885: 251). Nevertheless, the frontispiece of his *Work and Adventure in New Guinea 1877 to 1885* showed a number of 'man-catchers' in use (see Plate 9). O'Hanlon has noted that the caption of this image 'Life in New Guinea', 'turns "man-catching" into a metonym for indigenous practice in toto' (O'Hanlon, 1999: 388).

While O'Hanlon considered a number of possibilities to explain the genesis of man-catchers, he tended towards the suggestion that missionaries, through their preoccupation with cannibalism and head-hunting, and their demand for artefacts that suggested these, influenced their creation 'or at least their ubiquity in museum collections' (O'Hanlon, 1999: 393). In arguing this, he drew on work by Torrence (1993) which demonstrated that obsidian-tipped artefacts in museum collections from the Admiralty Islands were modified in response to the desires of European collectors. Indeed, Torrence (1993: 468) suggested that 'only a small proportion of the objects stored in museums are likely to have been manufactured by local people

solely for their own use or for exchange within their own cultural context', a suggestion that has been reinforced by subsequent research on late nineteenth and early twentieth century episodes of collecting in both Central Africa (Schildkrout and Keim, 1998) and New Guinea (Gosden and Knowles, 2001, O'Hanlon and Welsch, 2000), as well as in relation to other particular artefact types.²²

Whatever function 'man-catchers' may or may not have had in their contexts of production, O'Hanlon noted that having been collected they rapidly acquired a role as 'ideological props in debates about the people of New Guinea' (O'Hanlon, 1999: 394). By making civilization's "others" visible at the heart of metropolitan Europe, however, they also become ideological props which demonstrated the relative civilization of people in Britain. If *Life in New Guinea* was presented as an endless round of "man-catching" and "cannibal feasts", at least prior to the civilizing influence of missionaries, this also implied that the 'progress of civilization' had enabled the British to behave differently, even if it was occasionally acknowledged that they had engaged in similar activities in the remote past.²³

It is my intention to suggest that anthropology during its "museum phase" (Stocking, 1985) in the late nineteenth century was considerably influenced by the missionary enterprise, and the dominant modes of missionary collecting during the preceding century, at least in Britain.²⁴ Rather than exploring the missionary foundations of twentieth century ethnography (cf. Harries, 2005), I am chiefly

²² See Jones (2007) on Toas from South Australia, Harrison (2006) as well as a number of contributions to (Byrne et al., 2011).

²³ Register: 1813, vol. 1, pp.1-10, 'An appeal, particularly to Churchmen, on the duty of propagating the gospel': Your own ancestors, in this very island, once worshipped dumb idols: they offered human sacrifices; yea, their sons and their daughters unto devils...But, mark the contrast: you are now a favoured nation' pp.7-8

²⁴ But see Hasinoff (2005, 2006, 2010) for an exploration of the ways in which American anthropology also built on missionary foundations in the early twentieth century.

concerned with the role played by missionaries in collecting and displaying things from other parts of the world. Collections made by missionaries form a significant component of many public collections in Britain, but missionary engagements with material things also established ways of classifying, describing and displaying objects that were adopted by professional curators in ethnographic museums, more or less straightforwardly, as the example of 'man-catchers' makes clear.

Conclusion

I have attempted to situate this thesis at a point where a number of matters of scholarly concern meet. These include modernity, modernism, and materiality, but also christianity, charity, civilization and collecting. Specifically, this research connects studies of missions to those of museums. Both are institutional forms that have been connected with "modernity" in different parts of the world, and were explicitly connected with "civilization" and the civilizing project during the nineteenth century. Rather than continuing a project of purification that has tended to separate Europe from the rest of the world, humans from things, and the church from the state, this research is an attempt to explore some of the complex ways in which these various domains have been bound together. My focus on things is not driven by an abstract concern with materiality, any more than my concentration on a museum is driven by a concern with modernity in the abstract. Instead, they emerge from the way in which historical artefacts allow one to navigate a course through various 'matters of concern' (Latour, 2004). 'Moving objects' cross geographical, conceptual, as well as disciplinary borders and boundaries, and as such work against attempts to impose abstract categorical distinctions that separate purified domains. In this, they

are not unlike humans. During the course of our own biographies we move between a range of different contexts, transforming some, being transformed by others, and passing through some without any noticeable effect. Whether artefacts transform their contexts or not, their mobility provides a way of making visible the ways in which these are arranged and connected. Like a barium meal, the radioactive qualities of which make it possible to see the anatomy of the digestive tract, the movement of particular objects enables one to begin to explore some of the ways in which missions and museums as institutional forms have been connected to one another, as well as some of the ways in which they functioned within their wider landscapes. I have situated my research in relation to a project of symmetrical anthropology, advocated by Latour (1993 [1991]), and in practice my focus on the movement of things to Europe, rather than humans to the rest of the world, is profoundly asymmetrical. Nevertheless, the overall aim of this has been to achieve symmetry by developing a negative mirror image of a history that has more frequently been told in the other direction.

While I am attempting to write a history that is artefactual in the sense that it pays attention to the involvement of historical artefacts in the events it describes, I am also conscious that this history is itself an artefact, and forms part of a process of exchange. In the original French version of *The Gift*, Mauss (1990 [1923]) used the untranslatable term *prestation* to refer to transactions that can just as easily take the form of performances, services or speech acts, as they can exchanges of material

things.²⁵ All in a sense are artefacts with the capacity to surprise, and thereby become what Strathern (1990) called 'artefacts of history'. One can read Marilyn Strathern's book *The Gender of the Gift* (1988) as itself a *prestation* - at one and the same time an artefact, event and performance, but also an experiment by which she engaged with and surprised others, as well as possibly surprising herself. It formed part of a chain of *prestations* and counter-*prestations*, in so far as it was offered in response to texts produced by others, including Mauss. If we understand *The Gender of the Gift* by its effects, rather than in terms of its context, it becomes clear that it has stimulated the creation of other textual artefacts, many of which share characteristics with the original. If texts are considered in this way, it becomes far from clear that there really are 'two ways of "explaining" or "making manifest" the nature of things' - the 'European' and 'Melanesian' (Strathern, 1990: 28). Rather it seems that the artefacts that 'Europeans' (and particularly modernist Anthropologists) make to 'explain' or 'make manifest' 'the nature of things' tend to be books or articles - textual 'technologies of enchantment' (Gell, 1992) with a particular capacity to contain their 'own prior context', to 'embody history' (Strathern, 1990: 24), as well as to 'evoke past and future simultaneously' (Strathern, 1990: 25). Strathern was of course correct in her insight that museum anthropologists are engaged in creating artefacts, events and performances that also do these things, but she was wrong to contrast this with the ways in which 'Europeans' such as herself attempt to 'explain' things.

This way of regarding texts is itself the outcome of an encounter I had with an aboriginal woman in Arnhem Land in northern Australia. She told me she was sick of

²⁵ Greg Denning (1996) has referred to his writings as 'Performances', which might be rendered as *prestations* in Maussian terms, although one wouldn't really 'perform a gift'. Presentation may be the closest English word, but sounds rather corporate and clumsy.

books. All 'whitefellas' ever seemed to do was write books and these never did anyone any good. I have to confess that I found this remark completely paralyzing for a number of years, since it shook my entire conception of the value of the anthropological enterprise. Over time, I realized that it has a symmetrical counterpart in the complaints made by many of the 'whitefellas' who live in Arnhem Land. They say that all that 'blackfellas' ever do is perform ceremonies, and these never do anyone any good. Nevertheless, anthropologists have come to understand that ceremonies do make a difference. They are performances and artefacts, but they are also experiments that "make manifest" the 'nature of things' in surprising ways (Strathern, 1990: 28). They enable people to make sense of the world. For people among whom the written word is a comparatively recent introduction, ceremonies and artefacts retain many of the functions we attribute to texts, as well as to scientific experiments. Just as 'we' continue to exchange gifts 'hidden below the surface' (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 4) despite the development of forms of commodity exchange, 'we' also continue to perform ceremonies and make works of art with similar functions. At the same time, the written word has a particular dominance among the forms by which 'Europeans' 'make manifest' the 'nature of things' (Strathern, 1990: 28), and this makes the proposition that books contain within themselves the capacity to change the world far from controversial.²⁶ Indeed, a major part of the Protestant missionary enterprise involved the translation of biblical texts into other languages and the distribution of these in book form. These books were believed to have the capacity to transform the places to which they were taken, as indeed they often have.

²⁶ See for instance Melvyn Bragg's (2006) *12 books that changed the world*.

If books have the capacity to become 'artefacts of history' (Strathern, 1990), it is in proportion to the degree to which they are surprising to their readers, and cannot be explained entirely in terms of the context from which they emerge.

This thesis then, is my own attempt to create an artefact that will go some way towards "making manifest" the nature of things' (Strathern, 1990: 28, cf. Wagner, 1981). The things I am concerned with are themselves surprising 'artefacts of history' that include rhino horns that prompted speculation about biblical accounts of unicorns, the club that killed John Williams, models of Hindu gods that were used in campaigns against the East India Company, as well as Pacific carvings that surprised and inspired modernists such as Henry Moore and Pablo Picasso. By engaging with, and tracking down objects such as these in contemporary public museum collections, my research has explored the extraordinary and surprising lives that many of these things have had since their arrival in Britain. As well as engaging with 'the social lives of things' (Appadurai, 1986), I will attempt to use the insights these provide to develop a perspective on 'the material life of society', with a focus on the London Missionary Society in particular. While the form that each artefact takes in the present is a product of its history, and can be interrogated as a source that documents something of the context that shaped it, I will suggest that these things have also been agents of history, transforming contexts and to a certain degree creating events and new artefacts around themselves. Despite ongoing attempts to control and dictate the ways in which people responded to them, 'the moving objects of the London Missionary Society' continue to be surprising, and to generate new engagements.

I only hope that the artefact I have created to engage with and “make sense” (Strathern, 1990: 37) of these things will rise to the challenge I was issued with in Arnhem Land eight years ago. It may or may not surprise others, but I have surprised myself through discoveries, insights and revelations that I did not anticipate when I set out on this research. In pursuing ‘the moving objects of the London Missionary Society’ I have been un-disciplined, adapting my methods to the objects of my investigation, and borrowing freely from the methodological toolboxes of archaeology, anthropology and history. I have also drawn on the professional practice of museum curators, using digital technologies as research tools as these have become available to me. As a result, this thesis is an exercise in border-crossings and beach-landings (Denning, 2004), and I only hope that in making this *prestation*, I am not received in the same spirit as the unfortunate John Williams at Erromanga.

Chapter 2

Methods

Experimenting with symmetrical anthropology and the archaeological sensibility

In times when subjects of education have multiplied, it may seem at first sight a hardship to lay on the already heavily-pressed student a new science. But it will be found that the real effect of Anthropology is rather to lighten than increase the strain of learning. In the mountains we see the bearers of heavy burdens contentedly shoulder a carrying-frame besides, because they find its weight more than compensated by the convenience of holding together and balancing their load. So it is with the science of Man and Civilization, which connects into a more manageable whole the scattered subjects of an ordinary education.

*E.B. Tylor, Anthropology*²⁷

In the corner of a display case, in the Sainsbury Africa galleries at the British Museum, an engraved ostrich eggshell stands on a glass shelf supported by a perspex stand, alongside a similarly engraved gourd (see Plate 10). A short textual description attached to the shelf reads:

Water containers

Incised ostrich egg with resin rim and gourd flask with vegetable-fibre carrying sling

San people, Botswana
19th and 20th century

The nomadic peoples of Botswana normally avoid pottery unless obliged to settle in one place.

Ethno 1910-363
Ethno 1976 AF 5.2

Another slightly longer label, describing just the eggshell, suggests a less precise geographical origin, and a more specific temporal one:

Engraved ostrich egg flask

San people, southern Africa
Late 19th - early 20th century

²⁷ (Tylor, 1881: xi)

This is followed by a longer text connecting the eggshell to an ancient tradition of decorating ostrich eggs and using them to carry food and water, which archaeological finds from South Africa have dated back 60,000 years. As well as making the eggshell representative of a series of similar objects from the ancient past, both labels assert a time and place with which the specific example on display is associated - the place and time of its manufacture. Though they exist in the heart of contemporary Bloomsbury, their enclosure in glass, and their location in a gallery space dedicated to 'Africa' suggests that they belong in another place, as well as another time. These technologies of enclosure and textual description combine to imply that the engraved eggshell belongs to the southern African past, rather than the London present. In Johannes Fabian's (1983) terms, the eggshell is 'allochronous' - its coevalness with those viewing it is denied. This is a fairly representative example of the ways in which many objects are displayed in museums. Indeed, until relatively recently, the labels of many ethnographic objects only included their place of origin, and museum databases and other textual forms of documenting these collections continue to give an overwhelming prominence to the place from which an object is supposed to have come (Wingfield, 2011a). The temporal origins of ethnographic objects, where they are given, tend to be calculated in relation to the date at which they were acquired by the museum. In this case, the 'Late 19th - early 20th century' date given in relation to the eggshell appears to be derived from the date when the eggshell was acquired by the BM. This date, in 1910, is central to the eggshell's institutional identity as a museum object, forming the first part of its acquisition number: 1910-363.

However, the BM did not acquire this eggshell from an anthropologist or explorer, recently returned from southern Africa, but purchased it along with a metal display mount and around three hundred other objects from the LMS when they closed their museum. A published catalogue of the LMS museum, dating from 1826, mentions an ostrich egg ‘rudely carved and coloured by a Hottentot’.²⁸ An egg, ‘rudely engraved by a Hottentot’, also appears in a subsequent catalogue dating from around 1860.²⁹ Although it cannot be conclusively shown that the engraved eggshell in the BM is the one that left a trace in both these documents, it seems very likely that it was. This suggests that when it entered the collections of the BM in 1910, the eggshell had already been in London since at least 1826, and possibly earlier. While the engraved ostrich eggshell may have been decorated in southern Africa, where it was presumably acquired by a representative of the LMS, it may have already been in London for around a century when it was acquired by the BM. The ostrich eggshell at the BM may once have been created as a water carrier in southern Africa, but for nearly two centuries its primary function has been as a museum object in London.

By way of comparison, consider briefly the tomb of the poet Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) on the island of Skyros in Greece (see Plate 11). The text of Brooke’s most famous poem, *The Soldier*, forms the main inscription on the tomb, and begins with the lines:

*If I should die, think only this of me:
That there’s some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England.*

Like the display case at the BM, the tomb uses a combination of spatial demarcation and textual inscription to suggest that the space it encloses belongs to a place and

²⁸ Catalogue 1: 13

²⁹ Catalogue 2: 48

time other than those in which it currently exists. As containers, both tomb and display case use technologies of enclosure and inscription to link the spaces they enclose with the places and times in which their contents originated. As a discipline, archaeology has largely grown up among tombs and monuments, whether these have been prehistoric barrows, pyramids, or classical temples. It is not uncommon for ancient monuments to include textual inscriptions, so although Brooke's grave at Skyros in Greece is less than a century old it offers a good example through which to explore the archaeological sensibility – the skilled way in which archaeologists have learned to approach the things they study. When approached archaeologically, the text becomes just one element in the larger material assemblage that forms the grave. It can also be considered in relation to the creation of the grave by a Greek sculptor to a 'medieval design adapted to Greek surroundings' (Maybin, 2011).

As well as the parts of the grave that are visible above ground, an archaeological approach might also attempt some degree of excavation - a strategic dis-assembling of the monument in order to gain insights into the processes by which it was assembled in the first place. This would presumably reveal that the structure now visible was added some time after the original burial, when stones were piled over the body and a simple wooden cross erected. Approached archaeologically, Rupert Brooke's grave would also need to be understood in relation to its wider landscape. While the olive grove in which it is situated has become somewhere that is visited by literary pilgrims, the grave's presence on the island has had an impact that extends beyond this location. In Skyros town, some distance away, a 'statue of an ideal poet' has been erected in 'Brooke Square' (Maybin, 2011). Although the human body at the centre of the tomb may have its origins in England, the place that

is referred to by the text, the tomb is itself materially constructed using locally sourced materials and labour, and its presence in Skyros has transformed the surrounding landscape to the extent that new sites have been created in the island's monumental landscape. Just as the tomb creates a space in Skyros for Brooke's English origins, the display case similarly creates a space in Bloomsbury for the Africa of the eggshell's origins, suggesting that this does not truly "belong" in Bloomsbury, unlike perhaps Rupert Brooke.

Asymmetrical Anthropology and the Archaeological Sensibility

By emphasizing the similar technologies involved in the treatment of a nonhuman from overseas, encased in England, and a human from England, entombed overseas, I hope to have suggested some of the analytical and methodological possibilities offered by a symmetrical anthropology. While Latour developed the notion as a means of overcoming the 'Great Divides' of the 'Modern Constitution' (Latour, 1993 [1991]: 103 & 113) - between humans and nonhumans on the one hand, and between 'us' as moderns and 'them' on the other - there is another sense in which anthropology needs a 'complete overhaul and intellectual retooling' (Latour, 1993 [1991]: 101) in order to become symmetrical. This relates to a process of purification that has taken place within the discipline itself during the twentieth century. A hundred years ago, anthropology was a subject that readily encompassed archaeological, ethnographic, ethnological and biological approaches, but these have increasingly become separated from one another as a result of processes of disciplinary purification. The encompassing term 'anthropology' has largely been claimed by those who conduct ethnography, and are concerned with documenting

the unfolding processes of human life in the present (Ingold, 2008). Meanwhile archaeology, primarily concerned with the past and its material remains, has become institutionally separated through the formation of distinct institutional structures. This process is possibly best understood, at least in British universities, in relation to the development of Social Anthropology as a modernist project (Ardener, 1985). With a peculiarly 'presentist' approach (Fardon, 2005), British Social Anthropology largely treated things as markers of immaterial social relationships (Olsen, 2007), rather than as the material products of historical processes. Nevertheless, in 're-membering things' (Olsen, 2003), it is not sufficient to conduct a 'symmetrical archaeology' (Shanks, 2007, Webmoor, 2007, Witmore, 2007) in parallel to Latour's 'symmetrical anthropology'. In order to become truly symmetrical, the centre ground of a re-unified anthropology needs to be reclaimed from asymmetrical ethnographers who, through a strong methodological commitment to engagement with humans in the present, have struggled to recognize the significance and the agency of the nonhuman forms through which elements of the past remain present.

If the intellectual mood of the 1990s is best understood in relation to images of the fall of the Berlin wall, the first decade of the twenty-first century has been dominated by a very different image, the destruction of the twin towers in New York. During this decade many have retreated into the relative safety offered by borders and boundaries, whether national or disciplinary. In archaeology and anthropology, this has resulted in a widespread return to the safety offered by the methodological and literary forms associated with mid-twentieth century forms of disciplinary practice. In their introduction to the recent *Oxford Companion to Material Culture Studies*, Hicks and Beaudry (2010: 20) proposed a self-consciously reactionary

argument for ‘the continued relevance of modernist models of disciplinary purity’, defined largely in terms of modes of fieldwork and research practice. Nevertheless, the forms of extension associated with this return to methodologically defined disciplinary purity have frequently been less about developing new forms of knowledge about the world, than a form of what Ardener (1985) referred to as imitative pastiche. Over the past decade, scholarly innovation has been pursued by conducting research in new locations, so that instead of conducting fieldwork in remote areas and writing ethnographies about African and Pacific villages (Ardener, 1987), anthropologists have been increasingly interested in contemporary western institutions, with the sub-disciplines of medical and legal anthropology seeing the largest growth. Archaeologists on the other hand, have engaged with the contemporary world by conducting excavations of 1970s housing estates and Ford transit vans (Harrison and Schofield, 2010).

Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically (Henare et al., 2007) is a collection of essays that captures something of the mood of the decade during which it developed, retaining a strong commitment to participant-observation and associated forms of ethnographic writing. Many of its Cambridge-educated contributors (they disclaim the term ‘Cambridge school’ (Henare et al., 2007: ix)) embraced Strathernian positions of ‘radical alterity’, arguing for the replacement of an epistemological understanding of difference, in which different ‘cultures’ regard a shared world in different ways, for the notion of multiple ontologies. Like the position strategically adopted by Strathern in *The Gender of the Gift*, this can be regarded as forming an extension to the modernist effort to purify human groups into nation-like

segments, despite the proliferation of hybrid networks that are the outcome of histories of interaction and exchange between them.

If 'Europeans' and 'Melanesians', or anyone else for that matter, truly inhabit radically different 'ontologies', what happens when they establish long-term relationships of exchange, as in the case of missionary activity, and join their different 'worlds' together? One possibility is that they are forever constrained by these ontological contexts, condemned to misunderstand each others' attempts to trade 'gifts' for 'commodities', and *vice versa*. Another is that they would have to find potentially inadequate ways of translating between their (presumably now mutually transformed) ontologies. Indeed, in Holbraad's (2007) contribution to the volume, which draws on Viveiros de Castro's (1998) understanding of 'Amerindian Perspectivism', the ethnographer emerges as something of a shaman, crossing between worlds and returning with rare and precious forms of knowledge, a conception that has a great deal in common with modernist conceptions of the anthropologist as hero (Hayes and Hayes, 1970). Another possibility, however, and one that was suggested by Mauss (1990 [1923]), is that 'Melanesians' and 'Westerners' have never been as radically different as ethnographers have managed to convince themselves, and that despite different linguistic terminologies and legal codes, their modes of everyday practice in the world nevertheless entail a great deal of overlap. It is this that makes exchanges between peoples who have previously been geographically separated possible in the first place, even if these have sometimes resulted in misunderstandings. Whether or not people spoke the same language, when they encountered one another face-to-face they became coevals in

bodily terms, and this allowed them to engage in various forms of mutual *prestation*.³⁰ As Fabian (1983) and Wagner (1981) have pointed out, it is in the process of writing ethnographies that anthropologists have constructed 'cultures', *allochrony*, multiple ontologies, and the radical alterity associated with various forms of exoticism.

Drawing on the work of Candea (2007), another Cambridge trained anthropologist, Hicks and Beaudry (2010: 20) have celebrated the 'radical partiality of... knowledge of the world' that emerges from methodological forms of engagement which enact 'our knowledge of things'. Nevertheless, restricting forms of archaeological engagement to practices of research and writing that developed largely to make sense of the remains of prehistoric worlds seems like an unnecessarily myopic way of engaging with a world in which information is increasingly transmitted from one place to another by electronic means. Similarly, while ethnography, as a mode of writing, developed as a disciplinary practice to describe a world that was imagined in terms of discrete 'cultures', it seems an unnecessarily self-limiting way of describing contemporary medical practices and global financial transactions. I am not suggesting that the insights offered by disciplinary histories be jettisoned, nor would I disagree with Hicks and Beaudry's (2010) argument for the analytical potential offered by archaeological approaches if the discipline can transcend its salvage paradigm. Nevertheless, maintaining a slavish obedience to the particular forms of fieldwork practice that came to define both archaeology and social anthropology in their mid-twentieth century forms would seem to impose unnecessary limits on the possibility of methodological innovation and development in the pursuit of new forms of knowledge. If academic practice is a

³⁰ See discussion of this term on p.48

form of skilled material practice, as Hicks and Beaudry (2010: 20) suggest, then it is the possibility of new forms of engagement, whether in research or writing practice, that makes it possible to build ‘up the conditions from which the world can be apprehended anew’ (Strathern, 1988: 19) and enables our ‘knowledge of the world’ (Hicks and Beaudry, 2010: 20) to be transformed. Rather than ‘enacting our knowledge of things’, it seems that we may need to perform it, and to allow our performances the possibility of innovation and development in order to retain the possibility of surprising both ourselves and others.³¹ If archaeologists and anthropologists recognize at a theoretical level that their established modes of methodological practice result in partial and limited descriptions of the world, it seems to be either intellectual bad faith, or else simply disciplinary self-perpetuation to deliberately refuse to develop new forms of engagement through which less partial forms of knowledge can take shape. It would be something like physicists continuing to engage in forms of experimental practice entirely shaped by the understandings Newtonian physics, rather than exploring the possibilities offered by quantum theory. While this might suffice as a form of ‘enacting’ knowledge in the school classroom, it is hardly a mode of performance that is likely to generate surprise on a university campus.

While the strategic deployment of conventional forms of disciplinary practice by recent scholars of the loosely based ‘Cambridge-school’ has been influential, it is not the only model of anthropological practice offered by twentieth century Social Anthropology. Nearly fifty years before Marilyn Strathern (1988) wrote *The Gender of the Gift*, Max Gluckman, attempted to describe social relations he observed in

³¹ For a discussion of academic work as performance see the introduction to Denning (1996).

Zululand which involved both 'Africans' and 'Europeans'. Gluckman's (1940) *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand* has been described as 'the foundation text of what became known as the Manchester School of Social Anthropology' (Macmillan, 1995: 39), as well as the first fully developed example of 'the extended case method' (Frankenberg, 1982: 4). 'The Bridge' has largely been remembered in anthropology for its demonstration that Zululand society involved local whites, including Swedish missionaries, as much as it did the Zulu. I'd like to suggest that it can also be regarded as an early example of symmetrical anthropology. By suggesting that Zululand was modern, Gluckman performed a parallel, if reverse, rhetorical move to Latour's (1993 [1991]) claim that 'we have never been modern'. Gluckman used his description of *The Bridge's* opening ceremony to demonstrate the different roles played by the Zulu and 'Europeans', but also to demonstrate the way in which the ceremony involved new actors in Zululand society, such as motor cars. The ceremony itself was a rite of passage performed for a nonhuman entity: *The Bridge*. This was decorated for the occasion with 'arches of branches....erected at each end' (Gluckman 1940a: 5), much like a human prepared for initiation. According to Gluckman, 'the groups and individuals present behave as they do because the bridge, which is at the centre of their interests, associates them in a common celebration' (Gluckman, 1940: 28). The bridge was:

planned by European engineers and built by Zulu labourers... would be used by a European magistrate ruling over Zulu and by Zulu women going to a European hospital... was opened by European officials and the Zulu Regent in a ceremony which included not only Europeans and Zulu but also actions historically derived from European and Zulu cultures.

(Gluckman, 1940: 11)

Gluckman also pointed out that the bridge was paid for by Zulu taxes. If Latour were looking for a good example of the agency of a nonhuman actor, and in particular one

with the capacity to assemble human and nonhuman entities around it, it would be hard to better *The Bridge*. It would also be hard to find a better example than its opening ceremony of a hybrid form that emerged in spite of a range of official policies aimed at the purification of Africans and Europeans. I have recently argued (Wingfield, 2012 [in press]) that in writing *The Bridge*, Gluckman drew heavily on his archive of fieldwork photographs to provide particular details that feature in his analysis. Nevertheless, his description of the involvement of nonhuman participants in the ceremony was not an accidental artefact of the 'random inclusiveness' of photography (Edwards and Morton, 2009: 4). In the text, Gluckman argued that 'there is a material basis for the differentiation, and for the co-operation, between Zulu and European' (Gluckman, 1940: 20), suggesting that the inter-dependent interests between them were established by 'The Zulu desire for the material goods of the Europeans, and the Europeans' need for Zulu labour and the wealth obtained by that labour' (Gluckman, 1940: 21).

While many twentieth century Social Anthropologists proactively engaged in a process of purification in relation to archaeology, Gluckman (1965: 10) seems to have been somewhat ambivalent. In expressing surprise that some anthropologists, such as Malinowski, failed to recognize Africans and Europeans as a single social group, Gluckman suggested 'Possibly it is because anthropologists have not rid themselves as they claim of the archaeological bias' (1940: 11 note 13). Gluckman himself seems to have been something of a transitional figure in relation to the separation of archaeological and ethnographic approaches (Gluckman and Eggan, 1965: 4). Having registered for a Diploma in Anthropology at Oxford in 1934, he attended lectures in social anthropology but also took classes on technology and

archaeology. These were taught at the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) by Henry Balfour, a living representative of the nineteenth century holistic approach to anthropology. Gluckman went on to become the first person to submit a doctoral thesis in Anthropology at Oxford, but this was largely based on historical and archival work on the Zulu. Indeed, while the first part of *The Bridge* is concerned with the immediate events on a particular day in 1938, most of the second part attempts to explore these in relation to the longer-term historical development of Zululand. A great deal of what I have described as the 'symmetry' of Gluckman's approach, his sensitivity to the roles played by nonhuman things, as well his interest in the long-term historical processes shaping contemporary events, seems to have been enabled by an archaeological sensibility that had been shaped by a training in anthropology that pre-dated the full separation of Social Anthropology from archaeology. Indeed, Gluckman (1971: 377) suggested that 'the Bridge' was written at the time of the 'breakup of general anthropology into several disciplines', and it is this which makes his approach a useful one to explore at a time when there are hints of a new rapprochement (Garrow and Yarrow, 2010).³²

Excavating Culture

Gluckman's demonstration of the involvement of nonhuman things in events at *The Bridge* did not prevent Frankenberg, one of his followers, from suggesting that he had 'taught us' that it was 'social relations in action, rather than artefactual things, that made up the culture of a community' (Frankenberg, 2002: 64). While it is

³² In April 2009, the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth held its annual conference around the theme: Anthropological and archaeological imaginations: past, present and future: <http://www.theasa.org/conferences/asa09/>

arguable whether Gluckman directly made such a claim, it is nevertheless useful to draw attention to the implied dichotomy, if only to transcend it. 'Social relations in action' can be glossed as the 'processes' involved in human life, and 'artefactual things' as their 'products'. While the construction and opening of the bridge undoubtedly involved social relations in action, it would be absurd to suggest that the bridge as a product, or 'artefactual thing', did not play a significant part in shaping subsequent social relations. 'Social relations in action' inevitably have an enormous influence on the material form taken by their products, but once shaped, these can make a difference in ways that may have been unanticipated when they were created. Alfred Gell similarly emphasized social relations in his suggestion that an anthropological theory of art should focus on the 'social context of art production, circulation and reception, rather than the evaluation of particular works of art' (1998: 3). His argument was built around an understanding of social anthropology as a discipline whose subject matter is 'social relationships', but in Gell's case this self-definition was drawn in contrast to American cultural anthropology, the subject matter of which he suggested was 'culture' (1998: 4). According to Gell, 'The problem with this formulation is that one only discovers what anybody's 'culture' consists of by observing and recording their cultural behaviour in some specific setting, that is, how they relate to specific 'others' in social interactions' (1998: 4). While this may be true if the only method available to the anthropologist is participant-observation, archaeological techniques and approaches have developed precisely as a means of discovering the 'culture' of people who are no longer around to observe. By reversing Frankenberg's formulation, we might regard 'culture' as the artefactual products of social processes. It might have been obvious for field-working Social Anthropologists

of the mid-twentieth century to imagine that their work began in the midst of social processes, but when working with archives, museum collections or archaeological sites, it is far more common to encounter 'culture' as product, removed from the processes that originally created it. While it might be argued that any context is necessarily a social context, and that an archive or archaeological site is also a setting for social interactions, these are not necessarily the most significant social relations that the material forms of particular cultural products bear witness to. When approaching something like the engraved ostrich eggshell at the BM, limiting one's analysis simply to its contemporary context of social relations would be as restrictive as an exclusive focus on the South African past. Instead, it becomes necessary to regard such contemporary contexts as the outcome of the processes of 'incapsulation' (Collingwood and Knox, 1946: 114), through which the products of past processes become embedded in the present.

Alfred Gell (1998: 10) suggested that anthropology has a particular depth of focus that is 'biographical' and 'attempts to replicate the time perspectives of... agents on themselves'. He also suggested that 'the spaces of anthropology are those which are traversed by agents in the course of their biographies' (Gell, 1998: 11). Given Gell's own arguments for the agency of art objects, it becomes necessary to consider how this 'biographical' time perspective and its spatial correlate differ between human and nonhuman agents. A great deal of ethnography has been shaped around the dimensions of space and time traversed by human agents. Nevertheless, there is a limit to the extent to which one can 'think through things' (Henare et al., 2007), and theorize artefacts, if one only engages in research practices that are shaped around a depth of focus taken from human biographies,

and are predominantly directed at elucidating human understandings. While human bodies have a biographical depth of focus that rarely exceeds a century, some artefacts have biographies that can last for considerably longer. At the same time, the 'lives' of other artefacts, such as ceremonies, can be extremely ephemeral and spatially limited. In contrast to the ethnographic sensibility, the archaeological sensibility has been shaped around the temporal and spatial dimensions traversed by artefacts in the course of their biographies. Andrew Sherratt has suggested that archaeology has two unique resources: 'Its access to the microstructures of daily life... and its ability to survey the grand sweep' (1993: 128). Both these features derive from a biographical depth of focus that is shaped around artefacts. While symmetrical anthropology needs to retain an ethnographic sensibility, in order to understand processes as they unfold in the present, it also depends on an archaeological sensibility, in order to approach the products of similar processes that have unfolded in the past.

Bringing an archaeological sensibility to the study of museums means being concerned with the material forms taken by these institutions, their display cases, collections and labels, but also the processes through which these different elements have come to be assembled together over time. It also means being concerned with the relationship between the visible dimensions of the museum, its public display spaces, and the hidden places where collections are stored. I have suggested elsewhere that the ways in which collections are classified institutionally exerts an influence on the way in which they end up being displayed (Wingfield, 2006). This makes approaching museums through an exclusive focus on their public display spaces like exploring an archaeological monument only in terms of the visible

features that exist above ground. Concentrating on issues of representation, on how well museums describe the people and places from which their objects come, is a bit like considering Rupert Brooke's tomb in terms of its capacity to represent England. Bringing an archaeological sensibility to the study of museums means not only putting texts in their place as part of wider material assemblages, but also excavating behind the immediately visible. It means being concerned with the ways in which museums operate in relation to processes that unfold over long periods of time, and the ways in which past events can have an impact on the present. It also involves exploring the way that museums and their collections are situated in a wider landscape, as 'other' places, much like the burial places more commonly studied by archaeologists.

While museums, like monuments, tend to be fixed points in a landscape, the things they contain, like the humans that visit them, are more likely to have moved during the course of their biographies. Rupert Brooke may have been born in England, but by the time of his youthful death he had already travelled to Germany, France, the USA, Canada, New Zealand as well as Tahiti where he lived for some time and may have fathered a child (Maybin, 2011). Similarly, while the engraved Ostrich eggshell may have been originally laid and decorated in southern Africa, it subsequently travelled to a number of other places before arriving at the BM in 1910. A great deal of work over the last twenty years has attempted to locate the collecting of ethnographic artefacts in relation to colonial engagements and forms of exchange (Byrne et al., 2011, Gosden and Knowles, 2001, Henare, 2005, O'Hanlon and Welsch, 2000, Schildkrout and Keim, 1998), just as other work has concentrated on the institutional histories of museums (Alberti, 2009, Gosden et al., 2007, Hill, 2005,

Knell et al., 2011, MacKenzie, 2009, Mason, 2007, Penny, 2003). Rather less attention has been paid to the lives of ethnographic objects between the time they were collected in the field and their acquisition by public museums.³³ Michael O'Hanlon (2000: 9) has proposed that as well as the "scene of collecting" in the field, ethnographic collections have a "before", involving conditions of funding and prevalent attitudes at home, but also an "after", which he suggested largely concerned their treatment at public museums. I would like to argue that in at least some cases, there may also be an important "in-between" stage, before things collected in other places became part of public museum collections. This thesis is an attempt address this lacuna by uncovering the lives of objects associated with the LMS collection, following their arrival in Britain. Discovering histories that have unfolded "in-between" the field and the museum, has meant engaging an archaeological sensibility in order to tease out the surviving traces of these events. It has also meant attempting to develop a symmetrical approach that privileges neither their place of origin, nor their contemporary location, but attempts to trace the movement of things through the range of places and times in which they have been situated.

Uncovering the now-dispersed LMS collection has involved approaching individual objects from a range of contemporary museum collections as a series of related small-scale archaeological sites. This approach of micro-excavation, which has been directed at the surfaces and appendages of museum objects, has made it possible to identify physical traces of some of the events in which different objects have been involved. This has suggested that in many cases, much of the activity

³³ Although, see Coombes (1994) on various forms of exhibitions.

involving these objects has occurred after their original manufacture. Some objects have holes in them where they were once tacked up for display (in some cases the tacks are still in the holes). In many more cases there are old labels attached to, or written onto these objects. Like other techniques and technologies, labelling is a form of action on matter which leaves traces that can be subsequently investigated.

Excavating the LMS collection has involved trying to identify the physical traces that have been left on things by particular events in the course of their biographies, but also the traces that particular things have left in documentary sources, whether textual or visual. While some approaches have sought to understand 'material culture as text' (Olsen, 2003), I have approached texts and other documentary sources as themselves forms of material culture. "Excavating" these has made it possible to locate objects from the LMS collection in relation to particular events, during which they were associated with a range of other human and nonhuman things.

Archaeology has traditionally specialized in making sense of the traces of technological processes, and so it is to archaeological techniques that I have turned to help me make sense of the labels attached to objects from the LMS collection. In some examples there are numerous labels attached to objects, and the overlapping edges of different labels has made it possible to establish the stratigraphic relations between them. The comparison of similar labels on different objects from the collection has made it possible to establish a typology of these, but also to order these chronologically using archaeological techniques of contextual seriation. By cross-referencing labels with surviving published catalogues of the LMS museum it has been possible to secure absolute dates for many of the key labels in the sequence (see Plate 12). A catalogue of the LMS museum, dating to around 1860,

was associated with labels that were colour coded according to the mission fields from which the objects came, and many of these coloured labels survive (see Plates 12 & 25, facing p.122). Another set of numbered labels correlates with a catalogue for an exhibition of 619 objects from the LMS collection that was mounted in 1867 at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, in a Pavilion of *Missions Evangeliques Protestantes* (Vernes, 1867). Some detachable labels are associated with exhibitions that were organized by the LMS across the British Isles during the first decade of the twentieth century, while another label type seems to have been added to objects from the collection immediately prior to their dispersal in 1910, since many of these are marked with prices. Like the layers of reoccupation uncovered during archaeological excavations, successive labels reveal a series of instances when objects have been re-inscribed, and put to new uses. Museum collections, like the places and structures studied in many fields of archaeology, are involved in ongoing processes of making and re-making, the traces of which can frequently be found overlaid onto their original surfaces. Indeed, the sequence of identification labels attached to objects from the LMS collection is a continuous one, and includes labels that have been added to objects comparatively recently, when they have been loaned to and acquired by public museums, as well as private collectors. Nearly all of the labels include a reference number of some kind, such as a museum accession number. It is this that links the objects to the textual documents in which they were inscribed, and allows them to be identified in relation to these traces. This number also frequently becomes central to the institutional identities of particular objects following their entry into museum collections.

Making Museum Objects

The biographies of things that formed part of the LMS collection provide a means of considering global processes that have operated over the last two centuries, but they also provide evidence of some of the smaller scale events involved in shaping these. Anthropological accounts have long recognized that human biographies, although continuous, are marked by key events, when shifts in social position are ceremonially performed. Igor Kopytoff (1986) has suggested that commodification might be regarded as a process that occurs during the biography of a thing, through which it is rendered 'common', rather than 'singular', and therefore exchangeable for other things. When the biographies of nonhuman artefacts are compared to those of humans, the ritual process and the commoditization process appear to have a great deal in common. Arnold van Gennep (1909) famously described the structural patterns involved in rites of passage, which relocate human bodies from one social category to another, as involving three stages: separation through detachment, liminal isolation, and reincorporation or reintegration. While anthropological theories of exchange have generally been considered separately from rites of passage, most acts of exchange including nonhuman things involve essentially the same three stages. Acts of exchange and rites of passage, symmetrically treated, appear to be analogous processes of transfer and transformation, and this suggests that just as rites of passage can be productively understood as a form of exchanging humans between groups (Allen, 2000, Lévi-Strauss, 1969 [1949]), so acts of exchange can usefully be understood as forms of ritual.

In her consideration of 'the objects of ethnography', Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) has drawn on some of Van Gennep's terminology by describing collecting as a process of 'detachment'. If detachment is simply the first stage in any act of exchange, however, this makes it only a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for making the 'objects of ethnography'. This is probably unsurprising, since a great many, if not the majority, of objects in ethnographic museum collections are ultimately the outcome of transactions such as purchase or gift-giving, that were not originally imagined as forms of collecting. Indeed, it is probably the accessioning of objects by museums, rather their acquisition 'in the field', that arguably involves the most clearly marked rites of detachment (Wingfield, 2011a). Most acts of exchange, after an initial detachment and possibly a period of isolation, subsequently involve reintegration, during which the things exchanged become embedded in new networks of relation. Might the donation of items to museums simply be understood as another instance of exchange, in which the museum's collection constitutes a new context into which they become reintegrated? At one level this is the case. Nevertheless, by referring to the 'objects of ethnography', Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) is utilizing a distinction between 'objects' and 'things' that derives from the work of Heidegger (1962), in order to suggest that 'detachment' plays a significant part in the 'objectification' of particular artefacts. Chris Gosden has suggested that while 'things' are embedded in the flow of life, an object is 'an artefact separated from other associated artefacts and from people' (2004: 39). While it is questionable whether any thing can truly become separated from the flow of life, which ultimately consists of much more than simply artefacts and people (Ingold, 2011), the distinction between objects and things ultimately depends on the ways in which they

are perceived by and related to by humans. For Heidegger, this was the difference between things that were ready-to-hand, but not necessarily thought about consciously, and objects that were present-at-hand and consciously perceived (Harman, 2010). Gosden (2004) has concentrated on practices of display as central to process by which 'things' come to be regarded as 'objects' and contemplated in isolation.

While many 'objects of ethnography' are not the outcome of deliberate acts of field collecting involving 'detachment', equally, the majority of museum objects are not displayed, and even those that have been 'on display' do not cease to be 'museum objects' when they are returned to the stores. Although the making of museum objects undoubtedly involves aspects of detachment, or alienation in Marx's terms, and many museum objects do end up on display, both detachment and display are potentially relatively ephemeral events in the processes by which 'things' become and remain 'museum objects'. In Van Gennep's (1909) characterization, one feature of the isolation phase in a rite of passage is that it includes humans undergoing some form of transformation. By attempting to detach something from the 'flow of life' through ceremonial means, and locating it somewhere that is in-between one place and another, it becomes possible to regard both humans and nonhumans as isolated, alienated 'objects'. This state is normally a temporary one that precedes their reincorporation into the ongoing processes of human life. What is peculiar about museum objects, as opposed to commodities for sale in shops and other contexts of exchange, is the expectation or perhaps the fiction, that this period of isolation should

be relatively permanent, or at least long-lasting.³⁴ In his consideration of commodity branding, David Wengrow (2008: 21) has argued for a focus on the ‘concrete practices of marking and labelling’. Commodities are goods that have been separated and packaged ready for redistribution and reincorporation, in a position that parallels human initiates who have passed through the separation phase of a rite of passage. Commodity brands mark these goods as uniform and substitutable, in the same way that the similarly substitutable bodies of initiates may be temporarily painted a uniform colour or even marked more permanently by incisive practices such as circumcision. To use a familiar example, branded commodities are like school pupils dressed in a school uniform, on which the institution of which they are a part stamps its authority through a school crest or logo. While the commodity labels discussed by Wengrow are visually attractive, or at least striking – like the painted or uniformed bodies of initiates – and therefore intended to display their uniformity, this can only infrequently be said of the institutional labels applied to museum objects. These have rather more in common with the labels applied to the bodies of inmates in institutions of confinement, such as prisons, where they are largely intended to facilitate institutional processing and tend to be more grimly bureaucratic. It should be clear that what I have in mind are not the explanatory labels that museums use to communicate information to visitors, such as those placed alongside the engraved ostrich eggshell on display at the BM, but rather the identification tags that more often than not are removed from museum objects for display. While commodity labels, like those that accompany museum objects on display, frequently include a summary of information that is deemed to be significant, the labels attached to

³⁴ Though in this they find symmetrical analogues in the position of human monks and nuns, whose permanent liminality has been explored by Turner (1974 [1969]: 133).

museum objects in storerooms frequently consist of little more than a number or code that allows the object to be identified when compared to a textual inventory. The presence of this label, even without the text to which it refers, nevertheless suggests that the object in question belongs in an institution. Some institutional identity tags are designed to be easily removed, like the numbered wristbands applied to patients in hospital, but others are intended to mark the surfaces of the objects to which they are attached more or less permanently. I hope I am not simply fulfilling Godwin's Law, that all discussions given enough time invoke comparison to Hitler and the Nazis (Godwin, 1994), if I suggest the numbers permanently tattooed onto the skin of concentration camp inmates as an example of a permanent form of institutional marking in this way. Electronic tags, barcodes and computer databases are the latest development of the bureaucratic technologies that are used to mark, but also control the bodies of both human inmates and museum objects.

Although institutional identity tags, like commodity brands, are applied to things that have been 'detached' and situated in 'other' places, they nevertheless serve opposite functions. Commodity brands suggest that goods are equivalent and substitutable, or 'common' in Kopytoff's (1986) terms. Identity tags on the other hand, through the uniqueness of the number they include, suggest that the things they are attached to are unique and un-substitutable, what Kopytoff calls 'singular'. Commodities generally pass through liminal 'other' places on their way to reincorporation somewhere else, where their seals may be broken. The things that become incorporated in museum collections, on the other hand, may suggest themselves as suitable long-term residents of 'other' places by being 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966). Some things become confined in museums as 'objects'

because of their removal from the place in which they were made, becoming 'other' through transportation. Other things, become 'other' not through movement in space, but because the passage of time allows them to seem 'out of place' in the very locations at which they were made and used. Although *heterotopias* of reform, such as clinics, function to re-place 'other' things, *heterotopias* of accumulation, as Foucault (1986) termed the museum and archive, are spaces in which 'other' things can be safely kept. It is this that allows some nonhumans to be said to "belong in a museum" just as certain humans might be thought to "belong in an institution". Foucault (2001 [1961]) has suggested that the categorization of madness, and the confinement of the insane, was part of the way in which Civilization was defined, but when viewed from a symmetrical perspective, the confinement of 'other' objects in museums may be an equally significant part of this process.

The numerous identity labels attached to the surfaces of museum objects from the LMS collection are suggestive of a series of rites of inscription, by which things have been continually 're-objectified' during the course of their biographies, most of which have been spent in museums. Just as it may be possible to read the marks of numerous rites of passage through which the body of a highly initiated Australian aboriginal man has passed from his skin, so the numerous and repeated institutional confinements of particular museum objects can be read from their surfaces (see Plate 13). As well as creating a stratigraphic series of labels that can be explored archaeologically, the repeated re-labelling of the LMS collection has been a reiterative process by which things have been marked and inscribed as 'objects', or institutional inmates. This process can be understood as part of a purificatory practice, through which the ongoing separation of these 'objects' from the times and

places in which they have existed has been ceremonially enacted. Technologies of inscription, such as labelling and cataloguing, alongside the confinement of museum objects in locked store rooms and glass cases, have been involved in an attempt to prevent the reincorporation of these objects into the flow of life at the locations in which they exist. Nevertheless, while rites of passage function as periodic enactments of particular social categories, in the case of human biographies these rarely coincide with the physical processes of birth, maturation and death, which they mark. Similarly, although rites of purification involving encasement, display, labelling and cataloguing have marked the surfaces of museum objects, making their ongoing institutional separation visible, these enactments have not always been successful in restricting engagements with objects in the LMS collection to those that have taken place in the controlled and liminal environments of museum display spaces.

Reassembling the LMS Collection

In arguing for a 'renewed empiricism' as a way of reinvigorating the critical tradition, Latour (2004: 248) has suggested that 'this would require that all entities, including computers, cease to be objects defined simply by their inputs and outputs and become again things, mediating, assembling, gathering...' In many ways this prescription describes a great deal of archaeological work, during which 'objects', seemingly removed from 'the flow of life', at least from a human perspective, become 'things' that mediate an encounter with the past, and around which people and things are gathered. While archaeology begins with excavation, the strategic dis-assembly of things, it generally proceeds by reassembling these in order to understand the form they previously took. One example of this might be post-excavation work on the

sherds of a pot, recovered during excavation. By refitting the different fragments, it can become possible to reassemble the pot into the approximate shape it once had. By comparison with participant observation, archaeological fieldwork may appear to be much more focussed on documenting products than processes. Nevertheless, the work of archaeology involves the enactment of a whole series of processes in order to reassemble now disconnected fragments, and set these back in relation to one another. While ethnography can be broadly defined as the documentation of processes as they unfold, archaeology generally begins with a product, and attempts to re-situate this in relation to the processes from which it was formed. Reassembling broken fragments of pot can enable an archaeologist to understand the process by which it was shattered, but also the processes of manufacture that gave it shape in the first place. In my research, the “pot” whose fragments I have excavated is the LMS collection, and my attempts at reassembly have been directed at understanding both the processes through which it was created, but also those through which it was dispersed. Although labels have played a significant role in converting ‘things’ into museum ‘objects’, they can also become the means to reassemble these objects with a range of other things by providing evidence of past associations. As traces of acts of inscription, labels become a means of demonstrating that, despite the ongoing institutional fiction that museum objects are detached specimens in ‘other’ places, they have nevertheless continued to be involved in a range of historical events.

In Latour’s terms (2005b), the LMS itself might be understood as an assemblage or actor-network, binding humans from around the globe together with a range of nonhuman entities. At the same time, the activities of this actor-network resulted in the creation a material assemblage, to use this word in its more

archaeological sense. The LMS museum collection was assembled in London from things that came from various locations around the world. While an archaeological assemblage may include a number of interesting things, the primary aim of careful archaeological excavation is not simply uncovering these. The dis-assembling of an archaeological assemblage through excavation is intended to reveal insights into its formation. This allows archaeologists to understand something of the involvement of humans in the processes that gave shape to what, at first sight, appears only to consist of nonhuman objects. Imagine the excavation of a flint knapping site. By carefully recording the location of each of the fragments of stone, and considering these in relation to the percussion marks left by the knapping process, it may be possible for a careful archaeologist to reconstruct not only the sequence of human actions which created these stone fragments, but also the physical location in which these took place. Even without the finished axe that was the ultimate result of these actions, it may be possible to reconstruct its shape from the fragments that remain, and thus gain an understanding of the intentions that shaped actions in the remote past.

Approaching the LMS collection as an archaeological assemblage that can shed light on the operation of the LMS as a whole has involved attempting to reassemble it. Much of my research has been directed at “excavating” a number of contemporary public museum collections where objects that once formed part of the LMS collection can now be found. In the first instance, this has involved working with online museum databases. These are partial sources of information, and privilege particular kinds of information such as the ‘source’ from which the museum acquired its objects (Wingfield, 2011a). This has made it relatively easy to identify 453 objects

at the BM, PRM and Horniman Museum that were acquired directly from the LMS in 1910, since the databases record the LMS as the source of this material. Other material was acquired from the LMS collection by private collectors, and this has not always followed a straightforward itinerary into public collections. The majority of A.W.F. Fuller's collection is now at the Field Museum in Chicago, where database documents identify the source of this material as Fuller himself. By working with electronic and paper records, audio recordings of Fuller talking about his collection, as well as archival documents now located in Hawaii, it has been possible to identify 162 objects from the LMS collection now at the Field Museum. At the same time, because Fuller acquired material from the LMS on a number of occasions during the first half of the twentieth century, it has only been possible to definitively identify three objects that were acquired when the museum closed in 1910. Other material from the LMS collection was acquired by Harry Beasley, whose collection was subsequently dispersed among a large number of public collections (see Plate 14 for a map illustrating this dispersal).³⁵ The dealer W.O. Oldman also acquired material from the LMS collection, which he seems to have supplied to public museums around the world, as well as to private collectors. Although documentary records of Oldman's purchases have made it possible to identify the material he acquired in 1910, identifying its current locations has not proved possible so far. As with the reassembly processes involved in most other forms of archaeological work, not all the necessary components survive, meaning that the possibility of complete reassembly is limited by processes of survival and recovery.

³⁵ Identifying these things has only been possible because Lucie Carreau has created a database that reassembles the Beasley collection and its documentation in order to understand its formation and dispersal as part of a parallel project to my own.

As well as being concerned with processes of assemblage formation, the archaeological sensibility is shaped by a concern with the processes involved in deposition - how it is that things came to be located where they have been found. The flint axe made at the knapping site discussed above, might be discovered some hundreds of miles from the place where it was evidently manufactured. "Findspots" for particular artefact types are sometimes plotted on distribution maps, and used in attempts to reconstruct the ways in which particular types of goods moved around a landscape. If a highly localized source of a material can be identified, such as with volcanic obsidian, then the distances of 'findspots' from this source can be used as an indicator of the extent of regional networks of exchange. If the museums in which objects from the LMS collection are now found are regarded as 'sites of deposition' or 'findspots', then their locations can similarly be used in relation to the places from which their objects originate, as indicators of the scale and direction of processes by which these things were relocated from one place to another (Plate 14 might be regarded as a distribution map of this sort). When considering what has survived at particular locations, archaeologists are aware that not all things survive equally well. Taphonomy is the term given to the study of the processes by which things decay or are preserved in the archaeological record, and it seems that a consideration of taphonomic processes is no less important when considering what survives in museum collections. When developing an exhibition at Birmingham Museum of objects collected by George Grenfell, an early Baptist missionary in the Congo, I was intrigued by the absence of *nkisi* figures in his collection, as these are a characteristic feature of many other contemporary collections. However, when I spoke to members of the church where the collection had been stored for ninety years before being

acquired by the museum, I heard stories about such objects being deliberately destroyed in the past.³⁶ It is this sort of taphonomic process that must be considered when approaching contemporary museum collections as archaeological deposits. Getting to grips with the range of events that can take place between the moment when an artefact is 'detached' from its maker, and the detachment involved in becoming part of a public museum collection is a step towards understanding these processes. Only then can any understanding be gained of the degree to which museum collections are representative of the range of artefacts that were involved in the historic processes of exchange and encounter that unfolded between people from different parts of the world (Byrne et al., 2011).

In the process of attempting to reassemble the collection of the LMS as a material assemblage, and to develop an understanding of the taphonomic processes by which dis-assembled elements have survived in various public collections, it has become clear that the LMS collection never existed in a finished or static form. Although a museum collection can be regarded as the product of the processes from which it has been formed, in many cases these processes have been continuous and ongoing. An archaeological assemblage provides a snapshot of things found assembled together at a particular moment, but in attempting to reassemble the LMS collection it became impossible to decide on a moment to "freeze-frame" this assemblage (Latour, 2010: 99). Instead, the documents in which objects had been inscribed at particular moments, as part of rites of inscription, became snapshots of

³⁶ George Grenfell's collection had been kept in a memorial room at his former church in Birmingham from 1907, when a memorial was set up following his death, until 1996, when the church donated it to the museum. Another person I spoke to from the church remembered dressing up in some of the material, but particularly recalled the spears. When I enquired as to where these were, since they were not among the collection I had examined at the museum, I was told that they had been stored in the old baptistry and that this had now been covered over with a new floor, presumably with the spears still inside.

the developing collection, and of events that involved processes of assemblage, but also dispersal. A large number of objects from the collection were dispersed when the LMS museum closed in 1910, but others were transferred into a loans collection, from which they continued to circulate as part of missionary exhibitions. Rather than the LMS collection existing as a finished product, it became clear that both collection and dispersal were processes that took place continually alongside each other. When the LMS museum closed, a number of significant objects had already been on long-term loan to the BM for twenty years. Even as the main museum collection was dispersed, additional collections continued to arrive in London, brought by returning missionaries. The closer my examination of the processes through which the collection had been assembled and dispersed, the more apparent it became that what I was documenting was not the formation of the collection as a single entity, but rather the continuous movements of particular things in and out of a number of points of assembly.

Andrew Moutu (2007) has suggested that collection be thought of as a way of being, and it is precisely this way of understanding collection as process, rather than product, that I am proposing here. Nevertheless, collection as a process needs to be considered alongside its counterpart, dispersal - assemblage alongside dis-assemblage - since they are parallel and connected processes. The dis-assemblage of the LMS collection contributed to the assemblage of private collections by Fuller and Beasley, as well as of public collections at the BM, the PRM and the Horniman Museum. In the case of a dealer like Oldman, processes of collection and dispersal unfolded continuously alongside one another, allowing him to make a living. At an archaeological excavation, the dis-assemblage of a site through excavation requires

the assemblage of a team of excavators and their tools, and of places for them to sleep and food to feed them. Archaeological excavation, and the forms of documentation this creates, enables the creation of a static snapshot of an assemblage that is undergoing gradual dispersal through processes such as decomposition and erosion. While the archaeological sensibility has been formed largely through the consideration of material assemblages at particular moments of excavation, the 'archaeological imagination' (Shanks, 2011) has nevertheless developed as a means of attempting to situate these discrete snapshots in relation to the long term processes from which they emerge.

It has long been acknowledged that the archaeological imagination draws on products of the ethnographic sensibility, but the essential complementarity of these two endeavours has not always been appreciated (eg. Leach, 1973a). Nevertheless, the visual and textual artefacts documenting the LMS collection, which I have assembled, function much like the photographic and textual records created by Gluckman while observing and participating in the opening of *The Bridge*. They make a configuration of things that was assembled at a particular moment of time visible, although there is an essential arbitrariness as to which 'social situations' end up being recorded and studied, which Gluckman seems to have recognized (1940: 10). However, when working with things in archives and museums, rather than those generated in the course of participant observation, the arbitrariness of the events or 'social situations' one studies derives largely from the arbitrariness of taphonomic processes. What is not generally arbitrary, however, is the way in which things were organised during the course of particular events. Gluckman recognized, following Durkheim (1995 [1912]), that the ways in which people performed their relationships

in ceremonial contexts could be extremely revealing of the structures that underlay their relationships during everyday interactions. Just as events at *The Bridge* brought together a number of otherwise dispersed participants in Zululand society, so the LMS collection brought together objects from the otherwise dispersed LMS mission stations. While Gluckman's description and documentation of an arbitrary event formed the basis of his analysis of the historical relationships that had shaped wider Zululand society, the surviving textual and visual sources which document the configurations taken by the LMS collection at particular moments in time form the arbitrary events around which my understanding of the LMS has been constructed.

Purification, Hybridity and Indigeneity

When the engraved ostrich eggshell arrived at the BM with its stand, rather than being a 'pure' African object as suggested by its current label, it had already been transformed: from a vessel for carrying water into a museum object. Having been relocated to London and displayed in the LMS museum, it became involved in processes of mobilization that would ultimately gather and direct resources back to the place from which it had come. By describing the eggshell only in terms of its manufacture in southern Africa, and removing its historic display stand, the BM effectively purified what had become a 'hybrid' object. It is therefore possible to understand the technologies involved in displaying museum objects as contributing to Latour's project of purification. Approaching the engraved ostrich eggshell symmetrically therefore involves attempting to understand it as an object that has emerged from a long-term history of engagement between Britain and southern Africa, which is perpetuated by its ongoing display in the Africa galleries of the BM. It

may appear that in arguing for the recognition of the hybridity of ethnographic objects, I am minimizing the ongoing claims that indigenous groups in different parts of the world may have on these things. This need not be the case, however, if the category of indigeneity is itself recognized as a something that is a product of a project of purification.

James Clifford (1997: 213) has suggested that museums be thought of as “contact zones”, both prescriptively and descriptively. The term, however, was coined by Mary Louise Pratt to refer to ‘the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict’ (Pratt, 1992: 6-7). While this might appear to be a very good description of the spaces established by overseas missions, Pratt’s notion of the ‘contact zone’ is largely a symmetrical re-shaping of the notion of the frontier (Pratt, 2008: 8). Nevertheless, there are a number of issues that arise when it is applied to the space of museums. In the first place, its concentration on ‘people’ is profoundly asymmetrical, privileging encounters between humans at the expense of encounters that took place between humans and nonhumans, sometimes at some remove from the geographical zone that was formerly described as the “frontier”. At another level, however, the notion of the “contact zone” emphasizes historical and geographical separation. Many of the encounters that take place in contemporary museums occur between peoples who have long histories of contact, for whom material exchanges with one another have become an everyday occurrence. In these instances, the “frontier” or “contact zone” has moved on, and “contact” has become an unremarkable event. In these cases, the museum space, where separateness is

emphasized and the historical encounters of the “contact zone” are re-enacted, is not a “contact zone” but a “purification zone”.

When Gregory Bateson (1973 [1935]) considered the possible long term consequences of contact between two groups that had been historically and geographically separated, he suggested that theoretically these could result in three possible patterns:

- a. The complete fusion of the originally different groups
- b. The elimination of one or both groups
- c. The persistence of both groups in dynamic equilibrium within one major community

(Bateson, 1973 [1935]: 38)

In most cases, the encounters that take place between different groups in contemporary museums, like those that took place in 1930s Zululand, are best understood in relation to Bateson’s third alternative. They are engagements between groups that now form part of a single integrated field of social relations. Nevertheless, these engagements play a role in maintaining an equilibrium of interaction that allows both groups to continue to exist, a process Bateson termed *schismogenesis*. While contemporary museum engagements may be staged to appear as ‘contact’ between groups that are distinct, this is nevertheless a performance, and one that creates a particular illusion. It is an illusion much like that presented by a mobius strip, whose opposite sides appear to be two different faces. By tracing the surface of a mobius strip with one’s finger, it becomes possible to see that what appeared to be two differently orientated surfaces form connected parts of what is ultimately a single plane. Similarly, when the groups that are performed in a museum spaces are followed beyond the moments when encounters are re-enacted, their degree of mutual involvement becomes clear. Many historically and geographically separated

groups, through generations of interaction, have come to function as part of a single field of social relations. Nevertheless, their differences from one another continue to be ceremonially performed as part of events that are enacted in ritual spaces of purification, including museums. Bringing an archaeological sensibility to the study of museums may involve looking beneath the ways in which collections are displayed in public galleries, but when applied symmetrically to humans, it also entails looking beyond the performances enacted in museum spaces.

Although processes of translation, blending and mixing have proliferated at the intersection between indigenous peoples and settlers, and between colonized and colonizers, the category of indigeneity nevertheless asserts an essential distinctiveness that purifies these blended categories. In South Africa, the imposition of apartheid (literally separateness) graphically illustrates a state-led process of purification along similar lines. Some of its earliest targets were the mixed or hybrid urban neighbourhoods of District 6 and Sophiatown. An engraved ostrich eggshell, might, by contrast, appear to be an emblematic symbol of the indigenous speakers of Khoisan languages in southern Africa, experience of conducting fieldwork in the Kalahari has suggested the numerous ways in which even the apparently 'ancient' indigenous technologies involved in the processing of ostrich eggshells have become entangled with the wider contemporary world (Wingfield, 2005). Indeed, many of the 'indigenous' peoples of the Kalahari who make beads from ostrich eggshells have European ancestors. A category of pure, untouched indigenous identity, which exists 'out of time' (Thomas, 1989), beyond the influences of global historical processes, is one that very few indigenous people, or the things that they make, would be able to fulfil. In southern Africa today, there are many more people who acknowledge a

degree of mixing and blending in their ancestry and cultural traditions, than there are who maintain that they belong to a pure indigenous tradition. Arguing for the acknowledgment of the mobile hybrid lives of ethnographic objects can be a way of suggesting that they might nevertheless be regarded as the legitimate heritage of people who themselves do not live lives that are defined entirely in relation to one purified cultural tradition or another. At certain points in southern African history, groups with both European and African ancestors have proudly identified their mixed heritage. A symmetrical anthropology would be one in which these peoples, and the things they and their ancestors have made would be taken seriously, rather than being either politely ignored, or pressurized to identify themselves as 'indigenous' and purify their identities.

At the same time, it would hardly be symmetrical to emphasize the hybridity that challenges the category of 'indigeneity', without suggesting that the terms against which it is defined, whether settler, colonizer, European, or "modern", are similarly illusory. Achieving symmetry involves acknowledging that the proliferation of hybrids undermines the purity of each and all of these categories. Moves have been made towards acknowledging the debts that colonial culture owes to encounters with indigenous peoples in settler societies in North America (White, 1991), the Pacific (Thomas, 1994) and southern Africa (Russell and Russell, 1979). Nevertheless, the cultural practices of Europe have sometimes seemed to exist apart from encounters with other parts of the world (Johnson, 2006), propelled by the unfolding of entirely internal historical dynamics. It is important that a symmetrical anthropology should emphasize the real debts that cultural practices in Europe owe to exchanges with peoples from other places. Nevertheless, these exchanges were not themselves

necessarily symmetrical. While Europe sent large numbers of humans to other parts of the world where they created frontiers or 'contact zones', until the period following the Second World War, it was largely nonhumans that travelled in the other direction. Tracking the movements of non-European artefacts to Britain, and their circulation in Europe, becomes a way of exploring how Europe itself became enmeshed in the processes of hybridization that emerged from these conditions of exchange. It may seem that acknowledging the essential hybridity of cultural practices in all parts of the world would suggest a shapeless melange of homogenizing globalization. Nevertheless, the promise of Latour's symmetrical anthropology is of the precise location in space and time of the flows, mediations and assemblages that emerge from an ongoing proliferation of hybrids that has emerged from interactions between humans and nonhumans, westerners and non-westerners, as well as between the past and the present.

Conclusion

In shaping the temporal and spatial dimensions of my enquiry into the LMS collection around the dimensions traversed by its objects in the course of their biographies, I have had to consider processes that operate over a larger geographical scale and temporal depth than most temporally specialized historians or geographically specialized ethnographers would be comfortable with. When considering processes that operate on temporal and spatial dimensions that are expanded beyond those traversed by human agents, the human biographical depth of focus associated with much ethnography and participant observation can become restrictive. Although ethnography can be expanded spatially to become multi-sited

(Marcus, 1995), participant observation cannot be expanded beyond the life-span of the participant and observer. In order to begin to understand processes that have unfolded over periods much longer than individual human lives, and over distances much further than those regularly traversed by any single human, it has been necessary to engage an archaeological sensibility. This allows a biographical depth of focus to be retained, but also to be expanded to approximate the scales of time and space over which the biographies of particular artefacts operate. By considering the biographies of artefacts that were collected by the earliest missionaries, and continue to survive in the present, it becomes possible to consider processes that have taken place over the course of the last two centuries. Just as the burial of Rupert Brooke in an orange grove in Skyros has led to processes that have transformed the island in various ways, so it becomes possible to ask whether the presence of objects from the LMS collection has impacted on the island of Britain. Despite institutional technologies that appear to confine and limit the movement of physical 'objects' to within the controlled spaces of museums, some objects from the LMS collection have circulated much more widely. The engraved ostrich eggshell at the BM has achieved a recent circulation beyond the Africa galleries illustrating the front cover of a book *Africa: Arts and Cultures* (Mack, 2000), published for a popular audience. This suggests that while European missionaries, and the things they took with them, played a considerable part in transforming the areas of the world to which they went, the 'objects' they brought back may also have been involved in the symmetrical transformation of life in Europe through the creation of new forms of knowledge.

1991 arguably marked the end of the dominance of modernism in anthropology, or at least the emergence of a sense of alternative possibilities, but it also marked the establishment of a technological innovation that has significantly transformed life over the last two decades, the World Wide Web. By embracing the singularity of an undivided world, its very name marks the time in which it was created. We may be familiar with the idea that the internet is transforming our personal lives and political processes around the world, but it is perhaps important to recognize the ways in which it has also transformed scholarly research practice. The web has made it possible to view images of objects in museums on the other side of the world, to search historic publications from libraries in other countries, and even to be alerted to relevant publications in other disciplines through keyword searching. Digital technologies have transformed the ways in which we write, and the ways in which we compile and store information. In pursuing this research, I have used a self-indexing electronic notebook, a database into which I have imported records from several different museums, as well as a digital library of thousands of images of museum objects, historic publications and manuscript texts. The relational database I have created during the course of my research, as well as functioning as an electronic assembly point for the dispersed LMS collection, has enabled me to consider objects from a number of museums in relation to one other, but also to set these in relation to historic documents and photographs. The ability that these technologies have given me to compile resources that are located in many different places has surely enabled me to 'perform' my 'knowledge of things' in ways that are significantly different to those that would have been possible had I only been equipped with pencils, paper notebooks, index cards and a film camera, as Max Gluckman was in 1938. To

continue to enact forms of archaeological and anthropological research and writing practices as if I was living in 1940, or even in 1989 would have been a travesty.

Although the events of 2001 may have been followed by a retreat behind established borders and a return to established modes of disciplinary practice and writing, the recent events of the Arab spring provide another opportunity to reconsider the insights generated at the end of the cold war. This thesis is an experimental attempt to harness the potential of digital technologies to reclaim the possibilities offered by symmetrical anthropology, an idea that developed from events in 1989 when the singularity of the world became perceptible. I have attempted to do this through the development of a negative mirror image, focussed on the role played by nonhuman non-Europeans in European, and particularly British history. If the heart of the LMS was in Britain, then from an anthropological point of view this is a heart of darkness. A great deal has been presumed about Europe as a source of Christianity, Commerce and Civilization, but all of these notions are constructs that developed out of perceived contrasts with other parts of the world. Ethnographic investigations have revealed more civilization, commerce and increasingly Christianity in other places than missionary (and modernist) rhetoric gave them credit for. By investigating the anatomy of the heart of the London Missionary Society, by considering the ways in which things were brought from the periphery, and flowed through it to other parts of the network, I hope to shed light on a location that is probably better known through myths than maps at present. Nevertheless, I have not attempted to describe the static anatomy of a lifeless heart but rather to follow the example of Mauss, who described his essay on *The Gift* as an attempt to describe whole 'entities', and to look at 'societies in their dynamic or physiological state' in

order to 'perceive what is essential, the way everything moves' (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 79-80).

Although archaeological sites are generally excavated from the surface downwards, starting with the most recent evidence of human activity, archaeological accounts almost invariably begin by attempting to describe the earliest human activity that has left a trace, and proceed by exploring the ways in which subsequent events built on, and were shaped by things that took place earlier. Most of the LMS collection is now dispersed between a number of different public museum collections, and these have been necessary starting points from which to reassemble the collection. At the same time, this account would make little sense as a narrative of discovery, related in the order in which I uncovered different traces of the history of the collection. Instead, I shall attempt to engage the archaeological, or perhaps anthropological imagination, and re-fit the various traces of the collection in order to construct a narrative that is structured around the temporal order of events. In the three chapters that follow, I shall attempt to give an account of the biography of the LMS collection by describing processes of assemblage (Chapter 3), circulation (Chapter 4) and dispersal (Chapter 5). As well as describing the life course of the LMS collection as an entity in its own right, I shall also describe the ways in which this has intersected with the biographies of a range of other humans and nonhuman entities that were involved in its formation. Having described these processes, and given an outline of the data I have assembled, I will return to thematic and analytical questions that arise from this account in the discussion in Chapter 6.

Chapter 3

Assemblage

The London Missionary Society Museum

It is hoped that a view of these "trophies of Christianity" will inspire the spectators with gratitude to God for his great goodness to our native land, in favouring us so abundantly with the means of grace, and the knowledge of his salvation; and at the same time, with thankfulness that these blessings have, in some happy degree, been communicated, and by our means, to the distant isles of the Southern Ocean. Many of the articles in this Collection are calculated to excite, in the pious mind, feelings of deep commiseration for the hundreds of millions of the human race, still the vassals of ignorance and superstition; whilst the success with which God has already crowned our labours, should act as a powerful stimulus to efforts, far more zealous than ever, for the conversion of the heathen.

Catalogue of the Missionary Museum, Austin Friars, 1826, iv

At sunset on 31 July 1813, John Campbell (1766-1840) heard the sound of musket-shots. The Minister of Kingsland independent chapel in London, Campbell had been sent to South Africa in 1812 to represent the Directors of the Missionary Society, as it was then known. His brief was:

personally to inspect the different settlements, and to establish such regulations... as might be most conducive to the attainment of the great end proposed - the conversion of the heathen, keeping in view at the same time the promotion of their civilization.

(Campbell, 1815: viii)

Having recently returned from an arduous six week journey by ox wagon to Lattakoo (Dithakong), a Tswana town in the north, Campbell had spent most of the day writing letters back to England (Campbell, 1815: 346). He was staying at Klaar Water, a settlement north of the formal frontier of the Cape Colony, where LMS missionaries had been working for much of the previous decade. Campbell was in the process of

persuading the people who lived there to stop referring to themselves as Bastards, or Hottentot Bastards, on account of 'the offensiveness of the word to an English or Dutch ear' (Campbell, 1815: 349).

Shortly after Campbell heard the shots, a messenger arrived to tell him that 'a camel-leopard had been shot and they wished me to see it before it died' (Campbell, 1815: 346). Although he hurried, Campbell found the giraffe collapsed, but was nevertheless astonished at the length of its fore legs, 'nearly six feet, so that a high horse could have walked under his belly' (Campbell, 1815: 346). No doubt impressed by Campbell's reaction, the person who shot the giraffe presented him with its skin 'to carry to England' (Campbell, 1815: 346). At a meeting the following week, the male residents of Klaar Water agreed to adopt a code of laws and system of justice, to refer to themselves as Griqua, and to rename their settlement Griqua Town.

The frontispiece of John Campbell's (1815) *Travels in South Africa undertaken at the request of the Missionary Society* (Plate 15) shows its diminutive author sheltering from the African sun under a dark umbrella. A caption printed in the book referred to the 'waggon &c' pictured 'on the Banks of the Great or Orange River'. While the landscape, and particularly the oxen appear peculiarly European, there is one element of the image that suggests Campbell must be in Africa - the giraffe grazing on a tree in the background. Following Campbell's return to London in May 1814, its skin, along with a number of others, was prepared for display by taxidermists. Visitors to the Missionary Society's rooms in central London could encounter the giraffe face-to-face at full standing height. It was presumably here that the image of the giraffe that featured on the frontispiece of Campbell's book was created.

"Scarcely more than a Christian trophy case"?

In the two paragraphs Richard Altick devoted to the LMS museum in his *Shows of London* (1978: 298-299), he did a good job of dismissing its significance. He suggested that it was 'the least known and probably the least rewarding' of London's 'privately owned exhibitions of exotica' (Altick, 1978: 298). He also suggested that 'the museum's purpose was not to advance learning but to publicize the Missionary Society's success in the field and attract subscriptions for the cause' (Altick, 1978: 299), and that 'its emphasis was something other than scientific' (Altick, 1978: 298). Altick's account focused on the museum's display of 'idols', and while he noted that the museum included 'a fair number of 'dresses, manufactures, domestic utensils, implements of war, music etc', he nevertheless concluded that 'in spirit the collection was scarcely more than a Christian trophy case' (Altick, 1978: 299). Although much of Altick's characterization is fairly accurate, it is the dismissive tone of his account that concerns me. The museum was founded in 1814, before the emergence of an organized scientific approach to ethnology or anthropology, so to judge the museum by its ability to advance learning in fields that were yet to emerge would be anachronistic. Indeed, what lends the LMS museum considerable interest is the fact that it predates not only the emergence of scientific anthropology, but also the proliferation of public museums that occurred in Britain during the second half of the nineteenth century. The LMS Museum undoubtedly contained a number of objects that were characterized in its catalogue as 'trophies of Christianity',³⁷ but this made it little different from the museums associated with the East India Company

³⁷ Catalogue 1: iv

and Royal United Service Institution, also considered by Altick. Indeed, the trophies in these other museums were frequently the result of violent military conquest.³⁸

A number of more recent accounts of the LMS museum have similarly concentrated on the display of 'idols' as trophies (Hooper, 2006: 65-66, King, 2011, Seton, 2009: 262, Thomas, 1991: 155). Hooper (2006: 27) has even suggested that abandoned 'idols' might be understood as 'performance indicators' through which missionaries demonstrated their success in conversion. It is noteworthy, however, that this perspective has been dominant among scholars of the Pacific, for whom the early religious 'idols' at the LMS museum are extremely significant as a unique and early source of information on pre-Christian religion in the region. Annie Coombes, who considered the LMS museum in the context of her book on the display of African material in late Victorian and Edwardian England, was more critical of the view of missionaries that dismissed them as 'idol-bashing evangelicals' (Coombes, 1994: 161). Nevertheless, in describing the LMS museum, she suggested that 'As a missionary museum all the items in its collection would have been associated with conversion, suppression of the slave-trade, philanthropy and education' (Coombes, 1994: 170), themes that were more closely associated with missionary activity in Africa. The most detailed recent account of the LMS museum has been given by Sujit Sivasundaram in a chapter of his book *Nature and the Godly Empire: Science and evangelical mission in the Pacific, 1795-1850* (2005). While he recognized that the museum included material from different areas of the world, and of various types, Sivasundaram nevertheless asserted that the museum 'can only be understood in the context of this web of exchanges between the Pacific and London'

³⁸ This includes the best known object from the East India Company's museum, 'Tipu's Tiger', now at the V&A.

(Sivasundaram, 2005: 179). Though I would endorse his suggestion that the museum needs to be understood in the context of a web of exchanges, my concern is that limiting this to exchanges with the Pacific is an artificial segmentation of one area of the world in which the LMS was active. I am concerned for similar reasons about only considering the museum within a predetermined timescale, whether that is the first half of the nineteenth century for Sivasundaram, or the late Victorian and Edwardian period for Coombes.

Rosemary Seton (forthcoming) will soon publish a brief history of the museum which draws on documentary archives at SOAS, but my intention here is somewhat different. Drawing on evidence that includes the objects that once formed part of the museum, a range of visual imagery, as well as published and unpublished textual documents, I have attempted to approach the LMS museum archaeologically (see discussion in Chapter 2). I have approached all forms of evidence as material traces of a museum and collection that no longer exist. Building on practices involved in a great deal of archaeological work, I have attempted to set these different forms of evidence in relation to one another in order to reconstruct something of the development of the LMS museum and its collection. Nicholas Thomas suggested in *Entangled Objects* that apart from two surviving catalogues, there are few sources about the establishment and organization of the LMS museum (1991: 243 note 259). My attempts at excavation have uncovered a number of additional sources that were not known to Thomas, but I also intend to demonstrate that even by setting these catalogues in relation to one another, and interrogating the differences between them, a great deal can be learned about the development of the LMS museum and its collection. With the surviving traces of the LMS museum reassembled, it becomes

possible to re-imagine the historical processes and the networks of relation and exchange through which the museum's collection was originally assembled.

The Old Jewry, 1814 - 1823

Following its formal establishment in 1795, meetings for Directors of *The Missionary Society* largely took place in a room near London Bridge that was lent by Joseph Hardcastle, a London merchant, and the society's first treasurer (Lovett, 1899: 90). The enthusiastic and interdenominational character of these meetings ultimately led to the establishment of the Religious Tract Society (1799), and the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), organizations that would contribute significantly to the work of the LMS (Horne, 1904: 13). Nevertheless, in 1814, the Directors took a 'set of rooms in the Old Jewry, near Cheapside', meaning that the Society acquired a relatively permanent material presence in London for the first time.³⁹ The minutes of the first meeting, held there on 29 August 1814, include a letter of thanks to Hardcastle which begins:

Sir, The Directors of the Missionary Society, having thought it expedient to engage some rooms in which the curiosities sent by our missionaries may be deposited, and judging that the apartments being centrally situated will be convenient for the meeting of the Directors in future..."

(Lovett, 1899: 91)

This suggests that the establishment of the society's headquarters in London was at least partly driven by an accumulation of property in the form of curiosities from other parts of the world. A note in the *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, announcing the preparation of a museum for visitors, suggested that 'curiosities' had

³⁹ *Evangelical*: October 1814, p.405, 'Missionary Rooms'

been 'transmitted from Otaheite, China, South America, and particularly from South Africa'.⁴⁰ With the stuffed giraffe among the curiosities with which Campbell had returned three months previously, it is perhaps unsurprising that rooms were needed. It was only four years later, in 1818, after more than two decades of existence, that the word "London" became part of the official name of the society. This suggests that the association of the society with the imperial metropolis was connected with processes of materialization, driven first by the acquisition of moveable and then immovable property in the form of rooms, even though many of its instigators and early supporters had been drawn from provincial regions of Britain.

In April 1815, the Missionary Museum was declared to be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11am until 3pm for the inspection of members and friends of the society.⁴¹ Admission was by ticket, issued for free by a director of the society, onto which would be written the name of the visitor and the date at which they were to visit. Alongside this announcement an appeal was printed:

Ladies or gentlemen, possessed of any curious articles suited to this collection, and disposed to part with them, will greatly oblige the Society by presenting them to the Directors to enrich their Museum.⁴²

It is striking that when the museum opened, the overwhelming criterion for inclusion among its collection appears to have been curiosity, rather than any specific connection with missionary activity.⁴³ Nevertheless, the museum seems to have been successful in inspiring support for the society. A guide to London, published in 1817, suggested that the curiosities were 'mostly from Africa and the South Sea islands', and that 'many persons viewing these are induced to become subscribers to the

⁴⁰ Evangelical: October 1814, p.405, 'Missionary Rooms'

⁴¹ Evangelical: April 1815, p.171, 'Missionary Museum'

⁴² Evangelical: April 1815, p.171, 'Missionary Museum'

⁴³ For a discussion of the relationship between curiosity and museum history more generally, see MacGregor (2007).

fund' (Hughson, 1817: 68-69). In February 1818, the *Missionary Chronicle* announced the despatch, 'nailed up in a case directed to Mr. Hardcastle',⁴⁴ of the 'family gods' of Pomare the 'King of Otaheite'. These, it was suggested, would 'enrich the Museum of the Society, and we shall probably give a print of them in a future number of this work'.⁴⁵ While the museum continued to receive donations of 'curiosities' from non-missionary supporters,⁴⁶ the eventual arrival of the Tahitian 'gods' in September 1818 marked a significant shift in the orientation of the museum, away from mere curiosity.⁴⁷

A visitor to the museum in February 1819 noted the 'very fine cameleopard' [giraffe], a series of Chinese paintings 'illustrative of the method of gathering and preparing tea, and a net made of human hair' (Griscom, 1823: 239). However, what struck him most were the 'peculiar productions, natural and artificial, particularly those which relate to the religious observances of the natives' (Griscom, 1823: 239). Pomare's gods also seem to have inspired donations of items connected with pagan religion from supporters in other parts of the world. In September 1819, a gift of twenty-two models of 'Hindoo deities' was recorded, a present from the Bengal Auxiliary Missionary Society at Calcutta.⁴⁸ While it seems likely that the despatch of this 'present' was in emulation of, or perhaps in competition with Pomare's 'idols', it is significant that the 'Hindoo deities' were referred to as models, presumably purchased rather than given up voluntarily by converts. These were intended to form the basis of prints that would be published in a new quarterly publication, *Missionary*

⁴⁴ Evangelical: February 1818, p.84, 'Otaheite'

⁴⁵ Evangelical: February 1818, p.81, 'Otaheite'

⁴⁶ Evangelical: May 1818, p.228, 'Missionary Contributions' & August 1818, p. 363, 'Missionary Contributions'

⁴⁷ Evangelical: September 1818, p.401, 'Otaheite'

⁴⁸ Evangelical: September 1819, p.385, 'India'

Sketches, which had featured an image of ‘the family idols of Pomare’ on its front cover in October 1818 (see Plates 16 & 17). The images of ‘Hindoo deities’ would be ‘accompanied by explanations from the Rev. Mr. Ward’s *History of the Literature and Religion of the Hindoos*’.⁴⁹ Ward, a missionary colleague of William Carey’s at Serampore for twenty years, had a far from sympathetic attitude to Hindu deities.

With such limited opening hours, only small numbers of visitors could attend the LMS museum. Nevertheless, objects from its collection became familiar to supporters through images in LMS publications. A letter written from Demerara (Guyana) in June 1819 by the LMS missionary John Smith suggests that he had not only already seen the October 1818 issue of *Missionary Sketches*, but had also discussed the image of ‘the family idols of Pomare’ with ‘the negroes’ in whose opinion ‘they must have been made in secret’ (Smith, 1825: 334). While the dispatch of models of Hindoo deities from India may be an example of competition between different mission fields, it is also suggestive of the way in which the LMS museum was understood as a repository of things that could be used in the production of imagery for missionary propaganda. As well as being depicted in fairly straightforward ways, objects from the museum also seem to have been used to provide the detail in images of imaginative reconstruction.⁵⁰ In the terms used by Alfred Gell (1998), the despatch of objects to the LMS museum enabled these to become the prototypes for two dimensional artworks, and the reproduction of these as printed images enabled the objects in question to achieve wider circulations than ever, through indexical forms. At the same time, becoming part of the museum collection in London did not necessarily preclude the continued circulation of the

⁴⁹ Evangelical: September 1819, p.385, ‘India’

⁵⁰ See Plate 65, facing p.236, originally published in *Missionary Sketches* in July 1819, and the *Missionary Chronicle* in August 1819.

objects themselves. The following chapter will consider the circulation of missionary collected objects in greater detail, but it is worth noting that ‘the principal idol of Pomare’s family’ was ‘conveyed around the Chapel’ at an interdenominational missionary festival at Penryn and Falmouth in Cornwall on 25 August 1819.⁵¹ While viewing these ‘idols’ from the South Seas moved some to write poetry,⁵² others were moved to make donations to the missionary cause.

In February 1820, an American clergyman who visited the museum recorded that two rooms had been filled, but his attention was particularly absorbed by the Tahitian ‘idols’, suggesting:

There are a great many of them, arranged on the shelves of the museum. And truly they are an exhibition worth looking at. Westminster Abbey has shown me nothing that has produced in my mind so much excitement....Their figure is a combination of the human with the brutal shape, in a way to give effect to all that is ugly and frightful in appearance. Surely they are fit to represent the hatefulness of devils and correspond well with the shocking rites of devil worship. Who that has a heart to feel, can refrain from rejoicing that the mercy of God has rescued a portion of the human race from the horrors of such an idolatry! And who that has a mite to bestow would grudge to give it for a purpose so noble.

(1827: 68)

It may be possible that the significant increase in missionary donations during the first decade in which the LMS museum was open (Cox, 2008: 97) was in some way connected with the circulation of such items in Europe, both physically and through

⁵¹ Evangelical: November 1819, p.477, ‘Missionary Festival in Cornwall’

⁵² Evangelical: February 1821, p.92, ‘Poetry’:

On viewing the relinquished Idols of Otaheite in the Missionary Museum.

Could man, who boasts his reasoning power,
Form the strange things we here survey -
Then praise them at the evening hour,
Or in the morning kneel and pray?

Oh! mournful thought! affecting sight!
Spirit of grace! thy influence shed;
Disperse the gloom of pagan night,
And light, and truth, and wisdom spread.

Yes-man debas’d his lofty mind-
That mind which the Creator gave:
His reasonings vain, perverse, and blind,
He form’d the gods which cannot save.

The light appears; its glory gleams -
Fair presage of an endless day!
Over “Tahite’s isle it beams,
She flings her “foolish gods” away.

two-dimensional images. In May 1820, it was announced that the museum would henceforth be open on Thursdays and Saturdays between 10 and 3,⁵³ presumably to increase the numbers of people who could visit. During the annual Missionary Week in London, the museum was also opened every day, except Sunday, 'for the accommodation of the friends of the Society from the country'.⁵⁴ Some of the interest in the LMS museum came, it seems, from those who were already familiar with certain items through their depiction in missionary publications. In May 1821, John Campbell returned from a second trip to South Africa with a number of additional items, most notable of which was the skull and horn of a rhino. This caused a stir in the British press, as well as in Cape Town and St. Helena, on its way to London.⁵⁵ The very long horn of the animal in question led to speculation that the 'unicorn' referred to in the book of Job was in fact a rhino.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it may be significant that Campbell had departed for Africa in November 1818, very soon after Pomare's 'family idols' had arrived in Britain. By the time he returned with a range of 'natural curiosities' that included a wildebeest and a number of mineral specimens, these had to compete for attention with the now infamous 'gods' from the Pacific.

Austin Friars, 1823-1835

In 1823, the museum along with the headquarters of the LMS moved to a new location at Austin Friars.⁵⁷ In August 1824, the *Chronicle* announced that the

⁵³ Evangelical: May 1820, p.289, 'Missionary Museum'

⁵⁴ Evangelical: May 1821, p.205, 'Missionary Museum'

⁵⁵ When in St. Helena on his return journey, Campbell sent samples of blue asbestos from beyond the Orange river in South Africa to the former-emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, months before his death in May of that year. See (1822a, 1822b)

⁵⁶ Catalogue 1: p.12

⁵⁷ Register: February 1823 (11), p.119, 'Recent Miscellaneous Intelligence: London Missionary Society'

museum would be open on Wednesdays from 10am to 4pm, 'the articles contained in the Museum being now arranged, and a Descriptive Catalogue printed'.⁵⁸ According to LMS accounts, £417 had been spent on the museum,⁵⁹ but the Directors felt that these expenses 'should not fall on the funds devoted to the support of the Missions'.⁶⁰ As a consequence, it was announced that a collecting box would be placed in the museum and that the price of the catalogue would be left to the 'liberality' of the purchasers 'in order to diminish the expense incurred by the preparation and support of the museum'.⁶¹ The tension between supporting overseas missionary work and the costs associated with maintaining the growing collection were perceived as far away as the Pacific. A letter written by John Williams in 1823 suggested that:

Did you know the state of the surrounding islands, how ripe they are for the reception of the gospel, you would sell the very gods out of your Museum, if it were necessary to afford the means of carrying the glad tidings of salvation to those now sitting in darkness.⁶²

The first reasonably comprehensive statement of the contents of the museum is provided by an 1826 version of this catalogue, which seems to have been updated to incorporate additions to the museum including a number of things brought by William Ellis from the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) in 1825. The catalogue begins with a title page on which the main categories of object in the museum are listed: Specimens in Natural History, Various Idols of Heathen Nations, Dresses, Manufactures, Domestic Utensils, Instruments of War &c &c &c' (see Plate 18).⁶³ There follows a statement about the museum which is given the title 'advertisement'. While many accounts of

⁵⁸ Evangelical: August 1824, p.365, 'Missionary Museum'

⁵⁹ Register: October 1824, p.425, 'London Missionary Society: Thirtieth Report'

⁶⁰ Evangelical: August 1824, p.365, 'Missionary Museum'

⁶¹ Evangelical: July 1824, p.333, 'Missionary Museum'

⁶² Evangelical: October 1824, p.457, 'South Seas'

⁶³ Catalogue 1: p.1

the museum appear to have been substantially based on this, it is perhaps useful to remember that it is, by its own admission, a statement of propaganda. It begins by stating that while most articles had been supplied by missionaries, 'a few others' were donations from 'benevolent travelers' or 'friendly officers of mercantile vessels'.⁶⁴ The different categories of material are then justified. The 'natural productions' are dismissed as items of curiosity, of most interest to children. Meanwhile 'articles of natural genius, especially in countries rude and uncivilized',⁶⁵ which seems to refer to Africa, the Pacific and Madagascar in contemporary usage (Lovett, 1899: 650), are intended to prove the capacity of these people for Christian instruction. Nevertheless, the real rhetorical weight of the 'advertisement' follows in a new paragraph:

But the most valuable and impressive objects in this Collection, are the numerous, and (in some instances) horrible IDOLS, which have been imported from the South Sea Islands, from India, from China, and Africa; and among these, those especially which were given up by their former worshippers, from a full conviction of the folly and sin of idolatry – a conviction derived from the ministry of the Gospel by the Missionaries.⁶⁶

For an evangelical missionary society, there is clearly a special significance attached to items that have been 'given up... from *a full conviction* of the folly and sin of idolatry' since this suggests a real change of heart following conversion. The advertisement states that in exhibiting these things, the Directors 'comply with the wish of the late king of Otaheite'.⁶⁷ The principal message which ends the advertisement (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) suggests that these idols, as 'trophies of Christianity' should inspire 'gratitude to God for his great goodness to our

⁶⁴ Catalogue 1: p.2

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Catalogue 1: p.3

native land', and commiseration for 'the hundreds of millions of the human race, still vassals of ignorance and superstition'.⁶⁸

Given the sermonizing focus of this introductory statement, presumably penned by a professional preacher, it is perhaps curious that it was followed by nine pages on which most of the things described are 'specimens in natural history'. The juxtaposition of these with 'articles of natural genius' led Sivasundaram to speculate that the museum was 'from one point of view... a storehouse of the products of people who lived in unity with nature' (2005: 177). Nevertheless, it is also possible to regard the disjuncture between the advertisement and the contents of the catalogue as evidence that the original rationale of the museum, that of general 'curiosity', was rapidly being overtaken by a focus on objects associated with religious practice and superstition. Although the text of the 'advertisement' suggests that the rhetorical force of this new focus had been recognized in 1826, the rest of the catalogue makes it clear that this had not yet led to significant changes in the organization of the museum or the contents of its collection. The catalogue also suggests that the collection was beginning to be arranged and classified in relation to the chief mission fields of the Society, with sections devoted to the 'East Indies', 'China' and 'South Africa'. This form of classification was not rigidly applied in 1826, but it nevertheless suggests a way of classifying the world geographically, according to the administrative divisions of the society. At the same time, the main classification of objects in the museum seems to have been in terms of the three categories outlined on the front page (Plate 18, facing p.108), and suggested by the 'advertisement': 'specimens in natural history', 'idols of heathen nations' and 'efforts of natural

⁶⁸ Catalogue 1: p.3

genius'. While items of one type may have been placed on top of cabinets containing material of another, the contents of the different cases suggests that they were generally intended to contain one of these three types of material. The most significant exception to this general organizational principle is a praying mantis that was displayed alongside artefacts from South Africa. This was discussed in the catalogue in terms of 'the superstitious reverence' in which it is held by 'Hottentots', as well as 'the general veneration in which it is held among uncivilized or superstitious people', a category that seems to have included the ancient Greeks as well as the 'common people of Languedoc'.⁶⁹ Although the discussion of the mantis as 'almost a deity' might be read as suggestive of an imposed European notion of people living at one with nature, it matches remarkably well with more recent accounts by professional ethnographers of the significance of the mantis for South African */Xam* (Barnard, 1992: 84-85). This suggests that a degree of ethnographic accuracy in at least some of the ways in which material was presented at the museum. It was, after all, professionally useful, if not essential, for evangelical missionaries to have some understanding of the existing religious views of the people they were attempting to convert.

Many of the catalogue descriptions are fairly brief, but a number include longer descriptions. In most cases these were substantially based on the accounts that had featured in missionary publications such as *Missionary Sketches* and the *Chronicle*. These included descriptions of the 'mantis',⁷⁰ 'idols' from India,⁷¹ as well as Pomare's 'family gods', all of which had featured in *Missionary Sketches* (see Plate 17, facing

⁶⁹ Catalogue 1: p.41

⁷⁰ Evangelical: August 1818, pp.346-347, 'The Mantis or Hottentot's God'

⁷¹ Evangelical: March 1818, pp.125-126, 'Representation of the Indian Idol of Ganesa'

p. 105).⁷² Other entries with longer descriptions related to Campbell's published accounts of his travels in South Africa (Campbell, 1815, 1822), or were items that could be discussed in the light of biblical passages, such as the rhinoceros, or zebra, both of which were considered in relation to passages from the book of Job. While a great many of the descriptions of Indian 'idols' drew on Ward's *Hindoo Mythology*, for those who failed to grasp the intended message, the catalogue was explicit:

These are specimens, Christian Reader, of the gods of the heathen in India, worshipped by more than a hundred millions of deluded people.⁷³

The longest commentary in the catalogue related to the 'household idols of Pomare', and included an account of missionary work in Tahiti since 1797. A translation of the 1816 letter from Pomare that had accompanied his 'family idols' was quoted, to the effect that:

I wish you to send those Idols to *Britane*, for the Missionary Society, that they may know the likeness of the gods that Tahiti worshipped... If you think proper, you may burn them all in the fire; or, if you like, send them to your country, for the inspection of the people of Europe, that they may satisfy their curiosity and know Tahiti's foolish god!⁷⁴

The commentary that followed this suggested that 'great additions have since been made to the number of idols now in the Museum, from other islands which have now embraced Christianity'.⁷⁵ The number of islands was put at about twenty, with 6000 adults and 3500 children baptised. Nevertheless, the achievements of the LMS were also discussed in relation to the 'large and handsomely built' churches, as well as the books of the bible that had been translated and printed.⁷⁶ Even more significant than baptism as a demonstration of true conversion, however, was the adoption of modes

⁷² Evangelical: December 1818, p. 539, 'The Family Gods of Pomare'

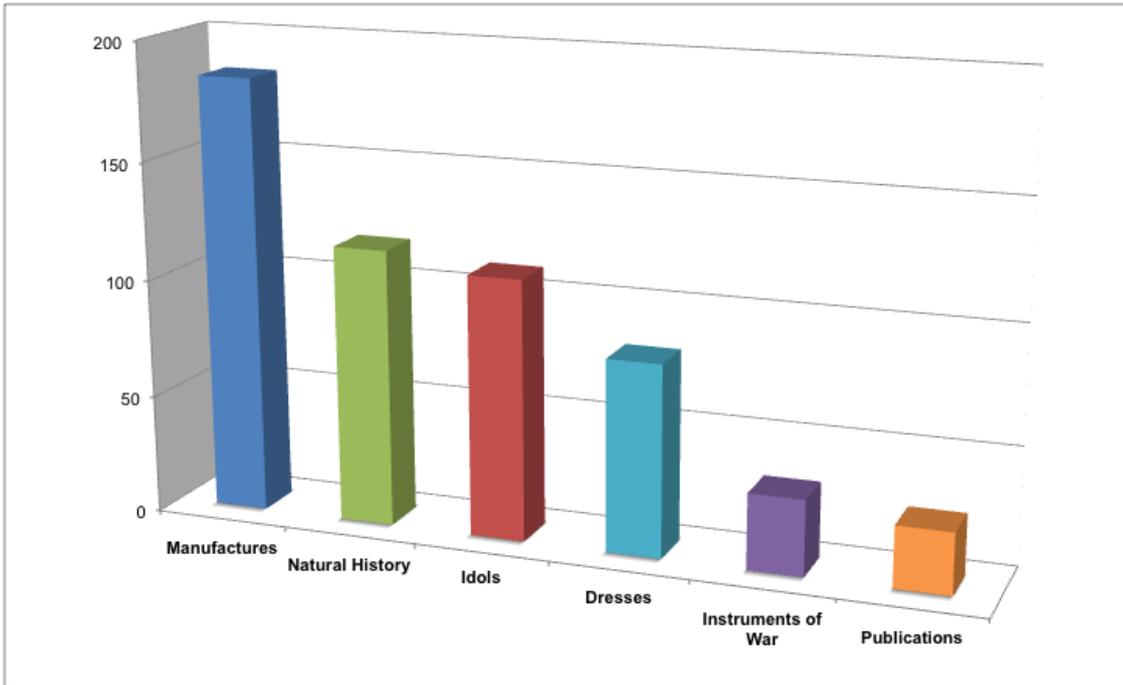
⁷³ Catalogue 1: p.31

⁷⁴ Catalogue 1: p.18

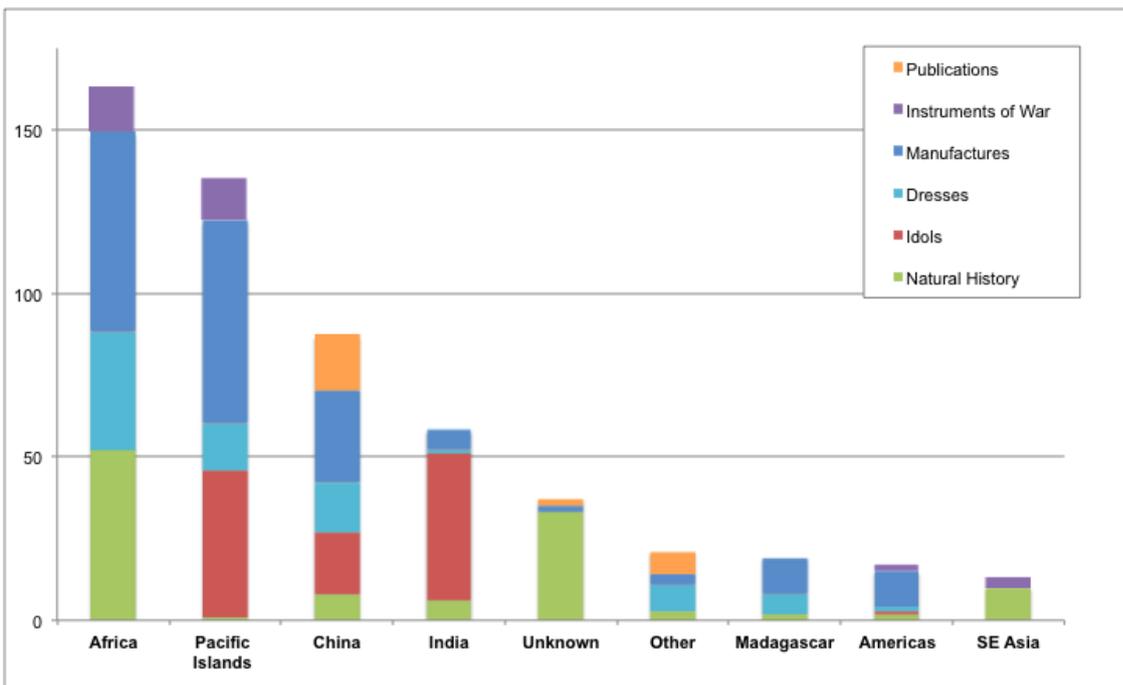
⁷⁵ Catalogue 1: p.18

⁷⁶ Catalogue 1: p.19

Plate 19



Bar chart showing a quantitative analysis of the 1826 catalogue, broken down into the main categories of material listed at the beginning of the catalogue (See Plate 17).



Bar chart showing a quantitative analysis of the 1826 catalogue, arranged according to region of origin and subdivided according to the main categories of material listed at the beginning of the catalogue (See Plate 17).

The contents of the 1826 catalogue of the London Missionary Society museum, represented graphically according to type of material and place of origin.

of missionary activity by South Sea islanders themselves. The catalogue referred to the 'nearly thirty native teachers.... labouring in fourteen islands where no European Missionaries are yet settled'.⁷⁷ A model of the 712 foot long church built by Pomare was displayed behind the 'idols' as a visible indicator of the enthusiasm of converts for Christianity, and the catalogue noted that meetings of the 'Otaheitian Auxiliary Missionary Society were held there on the same days on which the Parent Society assemble in London'.⁷⁸

Rather than simply understanding the LMS museum in terms of the rhetorical emphasis of these catalogue descriptions, it is also possible to attempt an analysis of the numbers of objects of different types in the museum's collection. If the categories outlined on the first page of the catalogue are retained, and the numbers of objects of each type that are listed in the catalogue is calculated, it becomes clear that in 1826, idols were outnumbered by specimens of natural history as well as by 'manufactures' (see Plate 19). When the same figures are compared according to the mission field from which they came, it becomes clear that more items in the collection came from Africa than from other parts of the world in 1826, especially given that many of the things with unknown geographical provenances are likely to be specimens of African natural history (see Plate 19). The museum seems to have been dominated, at least numerically, by what the catalogue referred to as 'efforts of natural genius'. Given the emphasis these are given, as proving the capacity to receive the Christian message of 'even the most uncivilized on mankind', it is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of these come from Africa, the Pacific and Madagascar.⁷⁹ 'Idols' on the other hand predominantly came from the Pacific, India and China. While people in the areas of

⁷⁷ Catalogue 1: p.19

⁷⁸ Catalogue 1: p.19

⁷⁹ Catalogue 1: p.iii

southern Africa where the LMS were active did not produce artefacts that could easily be classed as idols, these seem to have been effectively replaced in the museum's collection by large and charismatic animals, such as rhinos and giraffes, many of which were brought to London following Campbell's journeys of inspection.

There are a large number of objects from China that cannot be characterized as either 'idols' or 'specimens in natural history', and given that the 'civilization' of the Chinese was regarded as an obstacle to missionary success, it seems unlikely these items were intended to demonstrate the capacity of the Chinese to understand the Christian message. Many of the objects from China straightforwardly fulfil the category of 'curiosity', although a number are books in the Chinese language. Some Chinese objects listed in the catalogue are also suggestive of a category that would later become extremely significant in the LMS collection: the relic. Eleven objects were associated with Dr. Robert Morrison, an early LMS missionary to China, including a number of things presented by his servant Poon a Sam. Although Morrison was still alive in 1826, having recently returned to China following a visit to Britain in 1824, he had already become famous through his five volume Chinese dictionary, printed by the East India Company, as well as his translations into Chinese of the Old and New Testaments. Copies of these books were displayed at the museum and the catalogue suggested 'By this great achievement, many millions of the human race may be enlightened in the knowledge of God our saviour'.⁸⁰

What I have called an 'archaeological' approach, with a focus on the collection itself, makes it possible to gain a better sense of the way in which the content of the collection was connected to specific histories of missionary activity in different parts

⁸⁰ Catalogue 1: p.35

of the world. Just as the story of Morrison's work in China shaped the Chinese collection, the dominance of 'idols' among the Indian artefacts is suggestive of the campaigns by missionaries and their supporters against complicity with 'idolatry' by the East India Company. While the material from both the Pacific and Africa included a large number of objects suggesting the 'natural genius' of their inhabitants, these collections were also shaped by specific histories of engagement involving religious idols and large mammals. Though the museum had only been open for twelve years when the earliest surviving copy of the catalogue was printed, its collection had already begun to bear the imprint, not only of the specific histories of LMS work in their different fields, but also of the rhetorical effects by which this work was made to appeal to supporters in Britain. It is even possible to discern the beginnings of a focus on heroic male missionaries and their journeys of discovery, which would come to dominate the public image of the LMS and its propaganda for generations to come (Cox, 2008: 14).

Blomfield Street, 1835 - 1859

In 1835, just over two decades after the Missionary Society first took rooms at Old Jewry, a 'Mission House' was built at a cost of over £3000 in nearby Blomfield Street, where it would remain for next 68 years (see Plate 20).⁸¹ The museum was established in the midst of surplus land at the back of the new building, with a degree of physical separation from the administrative functions of the society, although it could be entered through glass doors at the far end of the main entrance hall.⁸² The museum had one main room, lit by a pair of skylights, as well as a lobby in which

⁸¹ Report: 1836, p.xlii, 'The Report of the Directors to the Forty-Second General Meeting of the Missionary Society'

⁸² Evangelical: January 1878, p.10, 'The London Mission House'

additional items were displayed. Nevertheless, the museum continued to be haphazardly arranged following its relocation. In April 1839 Henry Syer Cuming, whose family collection would form the basis of the Cuming museum in Southwark, wrote to the LMS Directors about 'the miserable state of the Missionary Museum... not only of utter confusion and Chaos, but in a state of ruin and decay'.⁸³ Having inspected the collection personally, Cuming suggested that objects in the collection were:

fast going to decay, the damp walls have generated mould... the Moth had committed its ravages... leaving hairless skins to mark its progress... the spider has spun its web in every corner, and the extraordinary works both of God and Man are alike obscured, and disfigured with dust and cobwebs.⁸⁴

Cuming suggested that his interest was prompted by having been 'cradled and nurtured amid curiosities' which had induced 'a love of them... which few can conceive, and none can surpass'.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, he also seems to have been aware of which arguments would most appeal to the Directors, asking 'Is it so much to ask, that those Idols to which the Heathen once paid divine honours, be preserved in England as a monument of the glorious triumphs of the Cross, achieved by the Christian armies of our Country'.⁸⁶ Cuming volunteered his services in 'identifying localities', but also offered to undertake the 'Augean task of arranging the Missionary Museum', should he be remunerated for his services.⁸⁷

This prompting may have had an influence, since an account published in January 1840 suggested that 'although the arrangement of the numerous specimens is at present very imperfect, and no catalogue has been published, we obtained

⁸³ CWM/LMS/Home/Incoming correspondence, Box 7, Folder 5 - Henry Syer Cuming to Bennet Esq. 29th April 1839.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

every necessary information from the labels affixed to the different articles, and from the intelligence and attention of the curator'(1840: 60). Earlier visitors had been impressed by the height of the stuffed giraffe, but by this time it had competition from a twelve foot 'staff god' from Rarotonga, which had been brought to Britain by John Williams in 1834. An image of the museum from 1843 shows these two central attractions alongside one another, with a zebra, crocodile and a number of antelope in the background (Plate 21). Above the cases on the back wall are several drums, spears and other assorted objects. Next to the giraffe is a model African house, which may be one that was constructed by the missionary Robert Moffat and is now in the BM (Af;LMS.3). The image also shows portraits of missionaries and native chiefs that are mentioned in the visitor's account (1840: 60). Although the article that accompanied this image in the *Illustrated London News* suggested that 'after their meetings, the friends of mission are wont to repair, to revive their sympathies by an actual inspection of those idol gods which it is the first aim of the society "utterly to abolish"'(1843: 342), these do not appear to be especially prominent in the image, apart from a Buddha seated next to the staff god. Another account of the museum, also published in 1843, describes it as 'an awful yet glorious place!', suggesting that there is not another 'connected with Protestant missions, in England, in Europe, or in the world' (Campbell, 1843: 134-135). The focus of this description is very clearly on 'idols' and 'objects of superstition', although a number of items connected with the recent death of John Williams are also mentioned. While a number of natural history specimens are noted, including Campbell's giraffe, these are largely referred to in terms of their connections to famous missionaries, such as the two large crocodiles that had been presented by Robert Moffat, one of which is visible in the 1843 image.

Another image of the museum was printed in the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* in 1847 to accompany a series of articles about the museum (Plate 22).⁸⁸ This offers a slightly different perspective to the 1843 image, but the contents and locations of the museum appear to be essentially the same. One of the articles that accompanied this image described the glass cases that lined the sides of the room, the shelves of which were 'well stored with objects, all of which have been suitably classified, as shown in the Society's catalogue'.⁸⁹ It also stated that 'If a still larger room could be spared for it, a better arrangement might be made of its many curious and highly interesting objects. They are now much too crowded'.⁹⁰ This account described the Buddha in the centre of the floor, as well as the 'gigantic idol-god' that stood alongside it at the centre of the room, quoting at length an account of its origins by John Williams. Campbell's giraffe was also mentioned, although by 1847 it appears to have been regarded as essentially out of place at the missionary museum. Nevertheless, the author suggested that 'a plea for its continuance in the Missionary Museum must rest on the ground of its connexion with Missionary history and the name of John Campbell, the African traveller'.⁹¹ Another article in the series described in detail the 'collection of idol-gods' in the 'first case (marked A.)', and noted that:

in the very midst of all these idols from the southern isles, is placed the beautiful model of the Missionary ship, the "John Williams," - and surely a more appropriate place could not be found for it. The ship is destined to voyage about just in that part of the world from whence these idols come, and to carry the Messengers and the Message of Mercy among the very people

⁸⁸ *Juvenile*: 'The Missionary Museum', September 1847, pp. 195-198, October 1847, pp. 219-221, December 1847, pp.265-269.

⁸⁹ *Juvenile*: 'The Missionary Museum', September 1847, p. 196

⁹⁰ *Juvenile*: 'The Missionary Museum', September 1847, p. 195

⁹¹ *Juvenile*: 'The Missionary Museum', September 1847, p. 197-8

who for ages have been left to darkness, cruelty, and death; but among whom a great light now shines, and a glorious change is taking place.⁹²

While a model of Pomare's chapel had served to emphasize the changes that Christianity had brought to the Pacific in 1826, by 1847, this function was now fulfilled by a model of the John Williams, launched three years previously in 1844 in memory of its namesake.

A third image of the interior of the museum appeared in the *Lady's Newspaper* of 1853 (Plate 23), ten years after the first. It shows a broadly similar scene with the Giraffe and Staff God in much the same places. The crocodile seems to have been removed, while one of the rhino horns has been replaced by a bust and possibly moved to the top of one of the cabinets on the rear wall. These no longer feature the zebra and antelopes pictured ten years previously, and instead contain a number of what may be religious images or figures. The differences between the two images, which take a very similar perspective on the museum, are suggestive of the way in which the museum was a place in which things were fairly constantly arranged and re-arranged. While the larger and most prominent items presumably didn't leave the museum, items were borrowed from the museum for use in missionary meetings of various kinds. Its function as a lending collection may explain why so little priority was given to the appearance and arrangement of the museum, with the constant arrival and departure of items contributing to the sense of disorder. Cuming's letter of 1839 suggests the decay of some items, perhaps particularly the natural history specimens, and this this may have been why some items were removed from display. The shift in the location of some items in the museum is also suggestive of the arrival of new objects. In the 1853 image, a glass case in front of the giraffe

⁹² Juvenile: 'The Missionary Museum', October 1847, p. 221

features 'an alligator encoiled in the crushing embrace of a Boa Constrictor'. This had been 'joyfully presented by the pastor and deacons of the Independent Church... at Providence New Chapel, Georgetown' in Demerara in 1849, 'in token of continued attachment to the London Missionary Society in principle and objects'.⁹³

The article that accompanied the 1853 image suggested that the museum was 'in some respects... unequalled in the world - particularly in the collection of idols of worship'.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, it also acknowledged that 'The various objects here grouped have at the present day become in most of the South Sea Islands objects of greater curiosity than in this country'.⁹⁵ This suggests an increasing awareness that the collection which had accumulated at the museum presented a rather flawed perspective on parts of the world, such as the Pacific, where missionary endeavours had been successful. In the process of being transported from the Pacific to London, 'idols' had become remnants of a pre-Christian state that no longer existed in the places from which they came. At a missionary meeting in 1855, the Rev. William Gill, visiting from Rarotonga, emphasized the point by noting that the young Rarotongan who was with him had not seen an idol before his visit to the Missionary Museum (Gill, 1855: 554), where he encountered a Rarotongan 'staff god' at the centre of things.

Careful and Intelligent Rearrangement, 1859 – 1885

Though there may have been an increasing awareness in the 1850s that the 'idols' in the museum's collection were no longer representative of life in the Pacific,

⁹³ CWM/LMS/Home/Incoming correspondence, Box 9, Folder 8 - Joseph Ketley to the Board of Directors of the London Missionary Society. 14th December 1849.

⁹⁴ The Lady's Newspaper, 329, 16 April 1853, 'Museum of the London Missionary Society', p.237

⁹⁵ The Lady's Newspaper, 329, 16 April 1853, 'Museum of the London Missionary Society', p.238

this does not seem to have prevented 'idols' in general from becoming an even more explicit focus of the museum at the end of this decade. A third image of the museum (Plate 24), printed in the *Illustrated London News* of 1859 is suggestive of a radical re-organization. The staff god is still shown as centrally positioned, but is flanked by a number of prominent religious figures from India. The image suggests these are the main focus of interest for a family of visitors to the museum. Meanwhile, the previously prominent specimens of natural history, including Campbell's giraffe, are no longer to be seen. The publication of this image was accompanied by an announcement that the museum '...has recently been rearranged in a most careful and intelligent manner by a son of the late Reverend John Williams, who was so barbarously murdered....These objects are now carefully labelled, so that we can pass along with both pleasure and instruction' (1859: 620). While earlier images are suggestive of a room that functioned as much as a storeroom as a space of display, in 1859 the museum appears to have been arranged to create a visual spectacle. Compare, for example, the fans of exotic weapons above the cases to the horizontal storage of spears in earlier images. This transformation should undoubtedly be connected to wider shifts related to practices of display, such as the development of ethnology during the second half of the nineteenth century,⁹⁶ but also the emergence of conventional techniques of display, associated with the exhibitions that proliferated following the 1851 Great Exhibition in London (See especially: Coombes, 1994).

Although the second catalogue of the museum had previously been undated, its description of the ordering and contents of the cases bears a close relation to

⁹⁶ In 1854, displays of ethnology were arranged as part of the Natural History Department at the Crystal Palace for the first time by Dr R.G. Latham. According to Latham, ethnology was a new science 'not exactly of the different nations of the world, but of the different varieties of the human species.' *Handbooks to the Crystal Palace: Natural History, 1854*, p.5.

those depicted in this image. In addition, the printers of this catalogue, 'Reed & Pardon', ceased to operate under that name in 1862 (Bigmore, 1884: 117).⁹⁷ A reference in the catalogue to the occupation of Zhousham, which occurred during the second opium war in 1860, suggests that this catalogue should be dated to the early 1860s. This dating is reinforced when the catalogue and the image are considered in relation to a set of images and descriptions of particular cases that were published in the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* during 1860 and 1861 (see Plate 25).⁹⁸ Apart from the Blomfield Street address, the opening pages of the catalogue, including the 'advertisement', were essentially the same as the earlier catalogue, though the opening hours of the museum were listed as Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, from 10 until 4 during the summer and from 10 until 8 during the winter. In addition, adjacent to the 'advertisement', a note about the classification of the museum was added:

There are two divisions, in the arrangement of the Museum;- HISTORY AND NATURAL HISTORY. The specimens, illustrating the former, are subdivided according to the Missionary Stations from whence they have been received, and are distinguished by the colour of the paper on which the number is printed, as under:

GREEN – South Sea Islands. In Cases A and C.

YELLOW – China and Ultra Ganges. Ditto D E M and I.

BLUE – India, including the three Presidencies. Ditto F and G.

RED – Africa and Madagascar. Ditto G, H and N.

PINK – American, North and South. Ditto O.

WHITE – The Miscellaneous Articles, and Natural History. Ditto B and Lobby.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ They had only begun to do so in 1849 (Reed, 1883: 23). It is significant that Sir Charles Reed (1819-1881) was himself a Director of the LMS and the son of a Congregational minister. He was also an antiquarian in his own right, and served as a Liberal MP for Hackney.

⁹⁸ *Juvenile*: 1860 (17), pp.12-18, 'The Missionary Museum', pp.44-47, 'The Missionary Museum no. II', pp.88-94, 'The Missionary Museum no. III', pp.102-105, 'The Missionary Museum no. IV', pp.158-164, 'The Missionary Museum no. V', pp.179-181, 'The Missionary Museum no. VI', pp.230-232, 'The Missionary Museum no. VII', pp.246-249, 'The Missionary Museum no. VIII', pp.270-272, 'The Missionary Museum no. IX', 1861 (18), pp.6-11, 'The Missionary Museum no. X', pp.56-61, 'The Missionary Museum no. XI', pp.79-82, 'The Missionary Museum no. XII', pp.102-104, 'The Missionary Museum no. XIII',

⁹⁹ Catalogue 2: p.ii

The careful labelling and re-arrangement of 1859 shifted the explicit focus of the museum away from Natural History, to the extent that most of these specimens were now listed at the very end of the catalogue, on white labels with other 'miscellaneous articles' and positioned in the liminal space of the 'lobby' . Even though an attempt was made in the catalogue to classify Natural History specimens scientifically, according to genus and species, it is clear that the primary function of the one case of Natural History specimens (B) that remained in the main museum was as a display of curiosities. An image from the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* shows that the most prominent feature of this case was a large Boa Constrictor, wrapped around a tree (see Plate 25, facing p.122). The snake had been sent to the museum in 1836 after it had been killed in Kristnapore, when the story of its death featured on the cover of the *Missionary Magazine and Chronicle*.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, its prominence, and its setting in the case would surely have reminded Christian visitors to the museum of Eve's temptation in the garden of Eden. When thinking about the contents of the museum, readers of the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* were even asked to consider 'the power which Sin and Satan have in the world!'.¹⁰¹

While the 'Natural History' collection became peripheral to the way the museum was catalogued and displayed in 1859, the objects that were referred to as 'History' were classified into two main categories: 'Idols and Objects of Superstitious Regard' and 'Articles of dress, domestic utensils, implements of war, music &c'. The 1826 catalogue had begun by listing Natural History specimens from Africa, but the refocussing of emphasis in the later catalogue was made clear by commencing with

¹⁰⁰ Chronicle: July 1836, pp.21-22, 'East Indies. Kristnapore. Peril from the Boa Constrictor', by Rev. George Gogerly

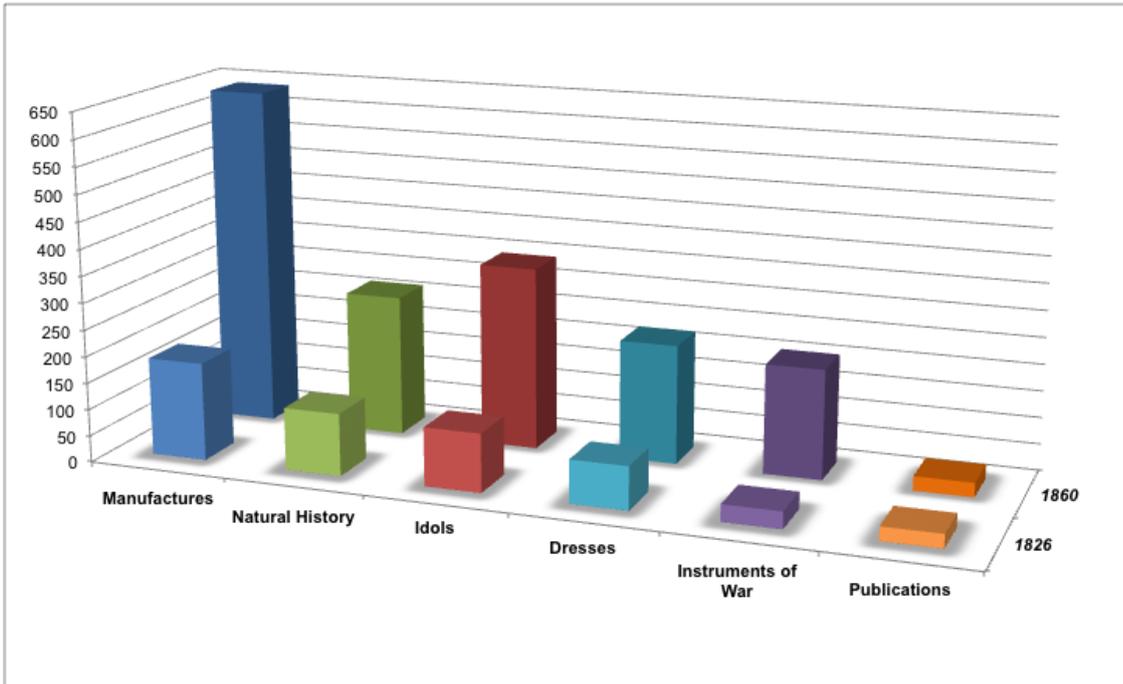
¹⁰¹ Juvenile: 1860 (17), p.12, 'The Missionary Museum'

idols from the Pacific, including those sent by Pomare.¹⁰² The catalogue also listed 'Idols and objects of superstitious regard' for each of the mission fields before the rest of the material, except in the case of Africa where nothing was classified in this category. Although the southern African missionary field had featured prominently in the museum when the collection included a large number of stuffed animals, by 1860 it was largely ignored. African artefacts were listed towards the end of the catalogue, just before a smattering of items from the Americas. It is also significant that three of the five cases featured in the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* of 1860 contained displays of 'idols' (see Plate 25, facing p.122). The two exceptions were the Natural History case (B), discussed above, and another that included 'Articles of dress...' from the Pacific. A particular connection was made between juvenile readers and this case, because of the model of the John Williams missionary ship, which was by then located there, rather than among the idols as in 1847. Juvenile supporters of the mission had paid for and been nominally responsible for the ship since 1844, when it was purchased with over £6000 that had been raised from contributions made by youthful supporters of the LMS. This case was also significant, because hanging above the ship was the club that had reputedly killed the eponymous hero. The series of articles about the museum in the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* began by announcing that 'the museum is altogether different from every other museum in the world' and rather than containing curious, beautiful or valuable things 'the chief purpose of the Missionary Museum is to show what men are without the Gospel'.¹⁰³ If this was at least partly true in 1860, it had certainly not always been the chief purpose of the museum. Nevertheless, this deliberate positioning of the Missionary

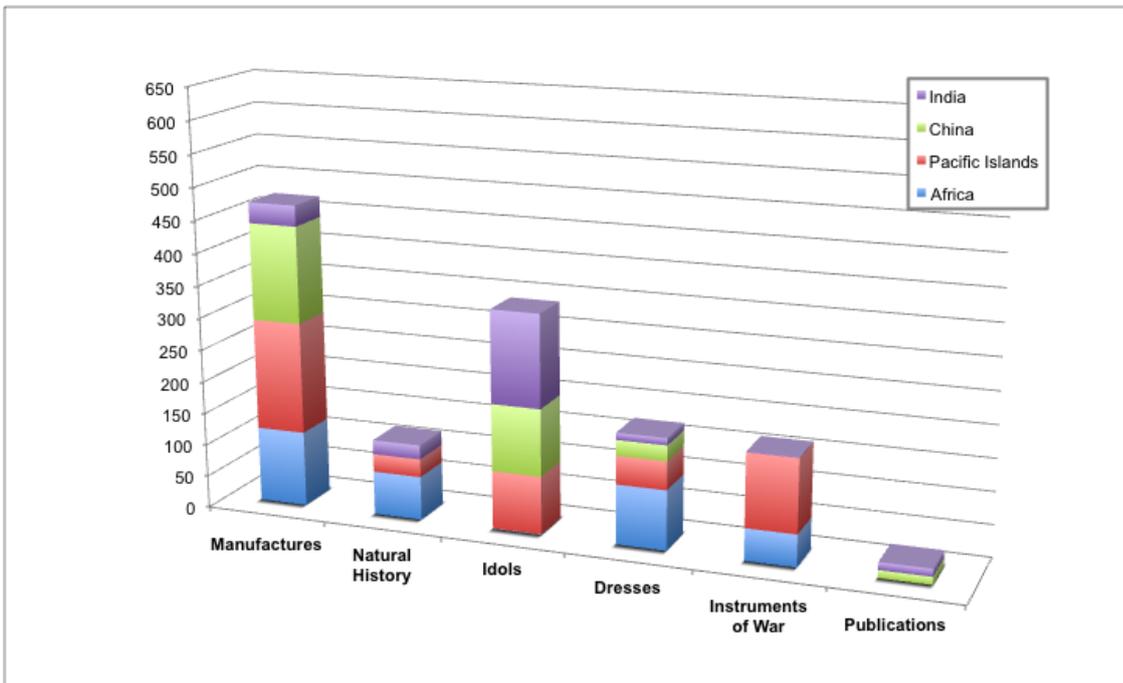
¹⁰² However, it is not clear whether this was the case prior to 1859, and it is the case that Polynesian idols were displayed in Case A, from at least 1843 onwards.

¹⁰³ *Juvenile*: 1860 (17), p.12, 'The Missionary Museum'

Plate 26



Bar chart showing a comparative quantitative analysis of the 1826 catalogue and the 1860 catalogue, broken down according to the main categories of material listed at the beginning of the catalogue (See Plate 19).



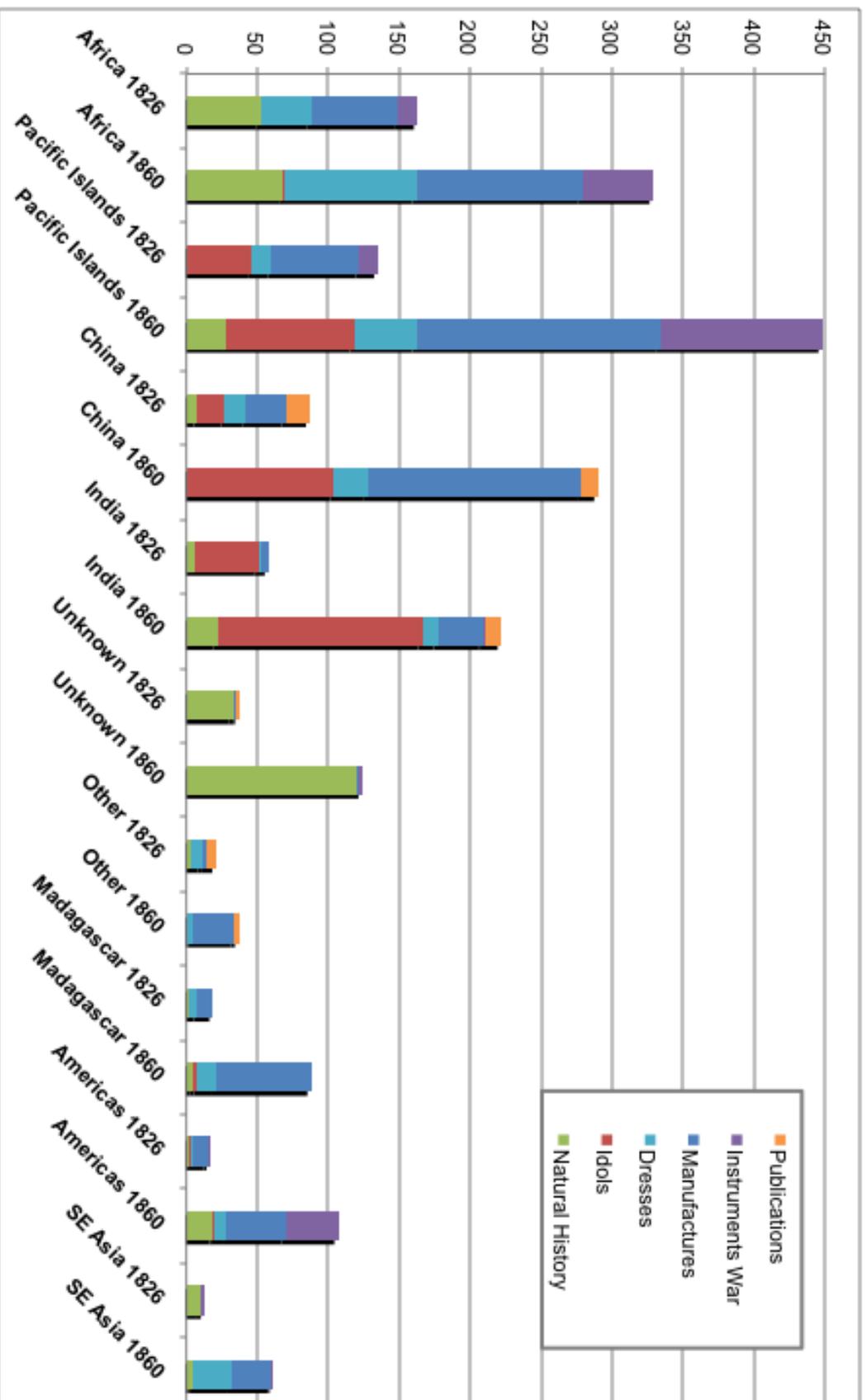
Bar chart showing only material listed in the 1860 catalogue from the four main regions of LMS activity, arranged according to the main categories of material listed at the beginning of the catalogue. When compared to the image above, which is shown at the same scale, it is clear that the majority of idols come from India, China and the Pacific, and that the majority of weapons come from Africa and the Pacific.

The contents of the catalogue of the London Missionary Society museum, dated to c.1860, represented graphically according to type of material and place of origin.

Museum in relation to other museums can be understood in relation to the emergence of other institutions with similar collections. The way in which the museum was presented in 1860 might also be regarded as the culmination of a shift in focus, away from straightforward curiosity towards idols and objects of superstition, which began with arrival of Pomare's 'Household Gods' in London in 1818.

If the total numbers of objects of different kinds that are listed in the later catalogue are compared to those from the first catalogue, it is clear that there had been a substantial increase in the total numbers of objects in the collection between 1826 and 1860 (see Plate 26). It is also clear that the numbers of Natural History specimens only increased by a relatively small amount. Indeed, these were overtaken in numerical terms by the items classed as 'idols and objects of superstitious regard'. This numerical shift undoubtedly contributed to the eclipsing of the African collections in favour of those from the Pacific, Indian and China. When the mission fields in which the LMS was active are compared, it becomes clear that the Pacific collections came to dominate the collections by 1860 (Plate 27 facing p.126). Nevertheless, one of the largest areas of growth in the collection was in the number of 'idols' from India, presumably connected to the campaign that had been conducted in Britain against what was regarded as 'state sponsored idolatry' by the East India Company prior to the mutiny in 1859. While 1860 marks the culmination of the LMS museum as a home for abandoned idols, it also marked a new shift in focus. This saw objects in the museum increasingly referred to as 'relics', with a connection to the history of the society and its missionaries. Though 'rejected gods' in the museum might show that 'multitudes' of the heathen 'have been turned from dumb

Plate 27



Bar chart showing a comparative quantitative analysis of the 1826 catalogue and the 1860 catalogue, arranged according to region of origin and sub-divided according to the main categories of material listed at the beginning of the LMS museum catalogue (See Plate 19).

idols to worship the blessed Jehovah',¹⁰⁴ this nevertheless suggested that museum objects from particular mission fields were more illustrative of past successes than they were of present conditions. Even objects from the Pacific that were not classified in the catalogue as 'Idols and objects of superstitious regard' were felt to 'show the condition in which the Polynesians were when the Missionary vessel first visited their shores'.¹⁰⁵ Objects that had once suggested the capacity of Pacific islanders to receive the Christian message through the quality of their workmanship, now served to show that it was 'not surprising' that 'people who could do such work in such a way' would 'become good carpenters, cabinet makers, blacksmiths, and builders, when they learned the use of iron and had before them the example of missionaries'.¹⁰⁶ While it had been suggested in the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* during 1860 that 'the chief purpose of the Missionary Museum is to show what men are without the Gospel',¹⁰⁷ a later article in the same series reassuringly pointed out that:

The instruments of cruelty, the weapons of war, and the horrid idols once feared and worshipped, are themselves proofs that old things have passed away, as most of these are relics and trophies – tokens that the wicked customs and abominable idolatries of former days have been abandoned.¹⁰⁸

Although the LMS museum continued to accumulate additional items, particularly when the LMS expanded their operations into Central Africa and Papua New Guinea during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the passage of time seems to have made it increasingly hard to escape the sense that the chief role of the museum was as a document of the society's history. At the same time, the

¹⁰⁴ *Juvenile*: 1860 (17), p.15, 'The Missionary Museum'

¹⁰⁵ *Juvenile*: 1860 (17), p.89, 'The Missionary Museum III'

¹⁰⁶ *Juvenile*: 1860 (17), p.93, 'The Missionary Museum III'

¹⁰⁷ *Juvenile*: 1860 (17), p.12, 'The Missionary Museum'

¹⁰⁸ *Juvenile*: 1860 (17), p.104, 'The Missionary Museum' no. IX

central focus of those working in the adjacent mission house remained on conditions in the contemporary world. As the LMS approached a century of existence, the value of its venerable history seems to have been increasingly recognized. Propaganda produced to appeal to its supporters increasingly dwelt on significant historical events, as well as on heroic male missionaries. This gave the objects in the museum collection an additional significance since they were connected to these individuals, and the histories of missionary activity they came to stand for.

Extensions to the Mission House at Blomfield Street in 1878 involved relocating the museum from 'the midst of the back land' to a newly built upper floor in the main building, where it was 'carefully arranged in the new cases provided for it' (Plate 28).¹⁰⁹ A short account of the museum at the time of this move suggested that the collection had 'accumulated during a long course of years by the agents of the Society in all lands'.¹¹⁰ Attention was drawn to the 'especially rich' collection of 'South Sea Idols, the use of which has long since passed away from that sphere of the Society's labours'.¹¹¹ As the collection became increasingly associated with the history of the society, the rarity and value of its contents also became more widely appreciated. Ultimately this led to a proposal from the Literature Committee in February 1885:

That the Board sanction the selection of sets of objects of interest from the Society's Museum for use when required for exhibition at meetings of various kinds.¹¹²

A condition of this proposal was that 'nothing shall be allowed to leave the Mission House for the purposes of such loan exhibitions except such articles as are definitely

¹⁰⁹ Evangelical: January 1878, p.10, 'The London Mission House'

¹¹⁰ Evangelical: January 1878, p.10, 'The London Mission House'

¹¹¹ Evangelical: January 1878, p.10, 'The London Mission House'

¹¹² CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minute Book, Minute 99, February 27 1885 - Loan Museum

set apart as a loan collection'.¹¹³ This resulted in the institutional separation of the loan collection from the museum collection, which by implication became static and confined to the attic. Although objects from LMS museum's collection had been loaned to missionary meetings and talks for most of the museum's history, the establishment of a loan collection in 1885 put an end to this. It divorced the museum from what had been one of its original and primary functions - appealing to the supporters of the LMS, the majority of whom were not situated in London and seldom if ever visited the Mission House. While the museum was increasingly regarded as significant for its connections with the history of the LMS, it also became essentially useless after 1885. By contrast, the loan collection became more popular than ever, ultimately eclipsing the museum in the large missionary exhibitions that were held during the first decade of the twentieth century. The development of these, as well as the ultimate dispersal of the museum collection are addressed in subsequent chapters.

Conclusion

In many ways, Altick's (1978: 299) characterization of the LMS museum as a trophy case is extremely apt. On the one hand, the museum contained a large number of 'trophies of Christianity': non-Christian religious objects that had been secured from converts to Christianity and sent to London as 'performance indicators' (Hooper, 2006). The arrival of Pomare's 'family idols' in 1818 seems to have sparked a spate of 'trophy collecting' that saw missionaries in different areas of the world competing to supply the museum with 'idols and objects of superstitious regard'. This

¹¹³ CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minute Book, Minute 99, February 27 1885 - Loan Museum

would see the museum increasingly focussed around these in the middle part of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is important not to forget that the museum continued to contain trophies of a more conventional kind. Many of the specimens of natural history were in effect hunting trophies from Africa. In 1826 this was still a numerically significant element of the collection, and Campbell's giraffe made these items visually prominent at the centre of the museum until the late 1850s. Elements of trophy collecting also informed the formation of other parts of the collection, perhaps especially the weapons. A number of African battle axes seem to have come from the 'Mantatees' who were defeated by allies of LMS missionaries when their 'marauding hordes' threatened the LMS settlement at Lattakoo (Dithakong) (Cobbing, 1988). As well as these weapons, the 1826 catalogue records four neck rings 'taken' from one of the wives of the Chief of the 'Mantatees'.¹¹⁴ Whether they were removed from her body while dead is unclear, but in this case at least, the Missionary museum seems to have been displaying trophies that were indeed the spoils of military victory. Nevertheless, in most cases weapons were displayed as trophies in order to suggest less militaristic processes of pacification. The club that killed John Williams was at one level a missionary relic, associated with the most famous missionary martyr of the nineteenth century, but at another was linked to the story of the man who had wielded it, who later converted to Christianity. Its display suggested that having become Christian, Erromangans had little use for such weapons.

Altick's analogy becomes more interesting when one thinks about the institutional function of a trophy case. The removal of objects from the LMS museum, and their deployment as emblems of success at a range of events involving

¹¹⁴ Catalogue 1: p.39

supporters of the missionary cause, is suggestive of the way in which sporting trophies are sometimes used. The depiction of objects from the museum in missionary publications alongside accounts of glorious victories is also suggestive of the way in which certain sporting trophies become ubiquitous through the widespread circulation of imagery depicting them. Even the way in which sporting trophies are often inscribed with the names of those who possess them is suggestive of labelling practices, through which both the LMS and its missionaries associated themselves with objects in the museum. While Altick seems to have used the term 'trophy case' in a dismissive manner, the more the analogy is explored the more useful it becomes as a means of exploring some of the ways in which objects from the collection were used in institutional settings. The trophy cases of sporting clubs are significant markers of institutional identities and histories, but at the same time are rarely allowed to interfere with the primary function of these institutions. Although it may be useful to revel in past glories, or to eulogise heroes of the past in order to inspire a new generation, institutions cannot allow themselves to lose sight of their situation in the present, or to continue the sporting metaphor, to 'take their eye off the ball'.

Although the functions of the LMS museum as institutional 'trophy case' may be quite different to those of the 'scientific' museums of ethnography that emerged during the last third of the nineteenth century, and into which much of the LMS collection was subsequently transferred, it nevertheless seems important to counter Altick's assertion that 'the museum's purpose was not to advance learning' (Altick, 1978: 299). Jeffrey Cox (2008: 101) has suggested that 'for most British children in the nineteenth century, the single largest source of information about what foreign peoples were like came from the foreign missionary societies of their respective

denominations.’ The appeal of the LMS, however, extended beyond any particular denomination. Missionary meetings at which objects from the LMS museum were displayed, to be discussed in the next chapter, seem to have taken place in the Churches and schools of the established Church of England, those associated with Methodism, as well as those that were connected to the Congregational churches that formed the core supporters of the LMS. LMS publications, and particularly the books written by particular missionaries, circulated much more widely than among the churches and individuals who regularly contributed to the society, and although LMS exhibitions in the early twentieth century were mainly staffed largely by those who attended Congregational churches, they were attended by people with a range of religious commitments. Given the wide reach of the LMS, at least in the mid-nineteenth century, it appears that the objects that were assembled at the LMS museum became the basis on which a wide swathe of the British public were able to imagine other parts of the world. Although the LMS museum and its collection may not have been primarily intended to ‘advance learning’ in a scholarly manner, they certainly seem to have had a role in creating particular forms of knowledge about the lives of people in other parts of the world. Indeed, these may have been more significant in shaping the British views of the world beyond Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth century than the forms of knowledge that were created in more scientific museums. When one considers the ways in which contemporary tourist brochures use images of temples and temple statues to promote India and China, Easter Island figures and tattooed Maoris to sell the Pacific, but images of elephants, giraffes and herd of gazelles to attract visitors to Africa, it is hard not to be

reminded of the ways in which the LMS museum and the objects in its collections projected similar images of these places from 1814 onwards.

Chapter 4

Circulation

The Missionary Exhibitionary Complex

In societies one grasps more than ideas or rules, one takes in men, groups, and their different forms of behaviours. One sees them moving, as one does masses and systems in mechanics, or as in the sea we notice the octopuses and the anemones. We perceive numbers of men, forces in motion, who are in movement in their environment and in their feelings.

(Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 80)

In August 1820, a new chapel opened at Carr's Lane in Birmingham, built to house 1800 people (Plate 29). Under the ministry of John Angell James, its congregation was on the way to becoming one of the most important supporting churches of the LMS in the British Isles (Goodall, 1954: 532). James had been a student at David Bogue's Gosport Academy at the same time as Robert Morrison, the famous missionary to China, and was a prominent and outspoken supporter of the LMS. However, according to his later recollections, shortly after the chapel opened:

At the annual meeting of the Missionary Society the abandoned idols which had lately been imported from the islands of the South Seas were exhibited on the platform in front of the pulpit. As the clock gallery was the most favourable place to gain a view of them this was crowded to excess. After the business had proceeded for about an hour and a half I received a pencil note to this effect. By all means stop the clapping of hands and stamping of feet. The gallery shakes under us. I have already heard two distinct cracks. This was signed by a young architect... We did stop the clapping and the business went on. For two hours was I kept in this agony of suspense and dread. Happily the meeting ended without any accident. Upon examination it was found that we had been preserved from an appalling catastrophe by an interposition of Providence, little less than miraculous for the two middle beams that support

the gallery were found cracked quite through. And we had the mortification to see the gallery of our new place of worship shored up by a row of props; the mortification however was lost in the joy and gratitude we felt for our deliverance - for had the gallery fallen, scores if not hundreds must certainly have been killed.

(James et al., 1861: 160)

Local support for the LMS was organized by auxiliary societies, each of which held an annual missionary meeting, as well as other fundraising events and collections throughout the year. While the Bengal auxiliary had sent models of Hindu deities to London in 1819, the main contributions of auxiliaries in Britain were financial. Their meetings were frequently addressed by missionaries visiting Britain on furlough, as well as others with experience of the mission field. At this meeting of the Birmingham Auxiliary, however, the central focus was these 'abandoned idols'. Their capacity to attract the attention of large numbers of Birmingham residents is demonstrated by the near catastrophic consequences described by James.

The previous chapter suggested that neither the museum nor collection of the LMS were fixed or static entities. The museum was physically relocated within London three times between 1814 and 1885, while the collection grew in a haphazard way, reflecting particular histories of engagement in different parts of the world, as well as changing preoccupations within the missionary movement. Having explored some of the ways in which the LMS collection was assembled over time, this chapter concentrates on the ways in which objects from the collection moved through space. Far from the 'trophies of mission' being hidden away at the museum in London, they became a focus for the promotional activities of the LMS across the British Isles. Pomare's 'Household Gods' were a particular focus of interest in the years following their arrival in Britain in September 1818, and it was noted in the last chapter that as well as travelling to Birmingham, the 'principal idol' was taken to

missionary festival in Cornwall, where it was 'conveyed around the Chapel'.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the use of artefacts from other parts of the world as illustrations and speaking aids by those promoting missionary activity does not seem to have been an exceptional occurrence, even if the consequences at Carr's Lane in Birmingham very nearly were. Alongside the museum at Mission House and the centrally issued publications of the LMS, in which objects from the museum were frequently depicted, individual missionaries, Directors and supporters of the society made use of artefacts to illustrate their spoken presentations, but also the written accounts they published of their overseas work overseas. There was, it seems, a missionary exhibitionary complex in which objects, brought from other parts of the world, were made visible through exhibition and depiction in order to solicit support for work overseas.

Exhibitionary Complexity

The notion of an 'exhibitionary complex' was formulated by Tony Bennett in an essay originally published in 1988, and republished in his book *The Birth of the Museum* (Bennett, 1988, 1995). It refers to institutions of exhibition including museums, but also dioramas and panoramas, national and international exhibitions, arcades and department stores. Bennett argued that:

The institutions comprising 'the exhibitionary complex'... were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas, where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power (but of a different type) throughout society.

(Bennett, 1988: 74)

¹¹⁵ Evangelical: November 1819, p.477, 'Missionary Festival in Cornwall'

He claimed that:

The Great Exhibition of 1851 brought together an ensemble of disciplines and techniques of display that had been developed within the previous histories of museums, panoramas, Mechanics' Institute exhibitions, art galleries, and arcades. In doing so it translated these into exhibitionary forms which, in simultaneously ordering objects for public inspection and ordering the public that inspected, were to have a profound and lasting influence on the subsequent development of museums, art galleries, expositions and department stores.

(Bennett, 1988: 74)

Bennett's concentration was overwhelmingly on the state, and he understood 'the exhibitionary complex' primarily in terms of 'a set of cultural technologies concerned to organize a voluntarily self-regulating citizenry' (Bennett, 1988: 76). I will return to Bennett's asymmetrical focus on the formation of human subjects rather than the confinement of nonhuman objects in Chapter 6, but it is nevertheless worth noting that his interests led him to concentrate on the second half of the nineteenth century, and the development of international exhibitions and public museums (which grew in Britain from just 50 in 1860 to 200 in 1900).

Bennett followed Foucault in discussing 'Discipline, surveillance and spectacle' (Bennett, 1988: 76) largely in terms of the exercise of state power, rather than the ways in which each of these terms has considerable resonances in religious contexts. Bennett accounted for exhibitionary practices prior to 1851 mainly through his discussions of the private cabinets of curiosity of European princes, or else the exhibitions held by Mechanics Institute in Britain and he seems to have had a peculiar blind spot when it came to considering religious displays. For instance, he failed to remark on the fact that the image of a cabinet of curiosities, which he chose to juxtapose with a view of the Great Exhibition, came from the Vatican rather than a

royal palace. Similarly, one of the quotations from Sir Henry Cole with which he began his book suggested that in order to make 'God's day of rest elevating and refining to the working man,' it should begin with 'church or chapel' in which preaching, music and 'pictures of beauty on the walls of the churches and chapels' would all play important roles (Bennett, 1995: 21). Only then 'because we cannot live in church or chapel all Sunday' should the working man be allowed his park, his cricket ground and 'museums of Science and Art' which would only open 'after the hours of Divine service' (Bennett, 1995: 21). Despite the significant religious dimension of this quotation, Bennett (1995: 21) only commented on the 'veritable battery of new cultural technologies' designed for the purpose of governing the populace, although church and chapel hardly seem new in this regard.

In discussing the 'Exhibitionary Apparatuses' of the exhibitionary complex, Bennett suggested that while museums contributed 'solidity and permanence', exhibitions injected 'new life into the exhibitionary complex...mobilizing it strategically in relation to the more immediate ideological and political exigencies of the particular moment' (1988: 93). It is perhaps significant that the LMS developed a very similar balance between the solidity and permanence offered by a centrally located museum, and the possibilities offered by displaying things during temporary events at a range of locations. The account I give here of the 'missionary exhibitionary complex', and the way it developed during the first half of the nineteenth century through the work of the LMS, is intended to offer an important corrective to Bennett's overwhelmingly state-focussed perspective. The 'rise of the missionary exhibition' as an event in its own right, which I will discuss towards the end of the chapter, developed during the later nineteenth century in Britain alongside the international exhibitions discussed by

Bennett. At the same time, there are hints that events may have unfolded less straightforwardly away from the metropolitan centres of London and Paris, from which a large number of Bennett (and Foucault's) examples are taken. On 28 May 1851, the former LMS missionary Lancelot Threlkeld (1788-1859) wrote to his son, who seems to have been crossing the Pacific, to remind him of an 'Exhibition' planned for 'October next' and to instruct him to 'get all the curiosities you can from Missionaries for it' (Threlkeld and Gunson, 1974: 296). Having been actively involved in sending Pacific 'idols' to the missionary museum in London during his youth, to which he subsequently directed a stream of visitors from Australia, it is perhaps unsurprising that Threlkeld set about organizing exhibitions of curiosities from missionaries during his retirement in Sydney.

In emphasizing the significance of the exhibitionary complex, Bennett (1988: 79) argued that 'museums, galleries and, more intermittently exhibitions played a pivotal role in the formation of the modern state and are fundamental to its conception as, among other things, a set of educative and civilizing agencies'. This description is also extremely suggestive of missionary societies, another set of 'educative and civilizing agencies' which also used these 'cultural technologies' to recruit 'the interest and participation of their citizenries' (Bennett, 1988: 79). The 'missionary exhibitionary complex' associated with the LMS illustrates some of the ways in which practices of exhibition and display were involved in the creation of a religious community with a particular conception of itself, but also its relation to people from other parts of the world. Many of the forms of presenting progress and civilization, which Bennett detected in the anthropological displays of the late nineteenth century, are direct developments of ways of thinking that developed in relation to the

missionary encounter. The reforming state, with which Bennett was mostly concerned in his essay, appears to have adopted many of the techniques and technologies associated with the 'exhibitionary complex' from the reforming church, at least in Britain. This is perhaps less surprising than it might seem, since many of the reformers who proposed and supported the development of state funded museums and exhibitions, such as Henry Cole, themselves came from strongly evangelical backgrounds. In adopting a reforming, as well as educative and civilizing mission during the second half of the nineteenth century, the British state may have adopted a set of 'cultural technologies' with strong roots in evangelical contexts. While the story of this influence is undoubtedly complex, the missionary 'exhibitionary complex' is arguably at least as good a source as the royal cabinets of curiosity, or the exhibitions at Mechanics Institutes (which included missionary exhibitions), from which to trace the genealogy of the 'exhibitionary complex' which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Missionary Journeys

On the same page that the establishment of the Missionary Museum was announced in the *Missionary Chronicle* of 1814, another notice described a large assembly at Castle-Green chapel in Bristol, where John Campbell gave 'a full relation of his Missionary Tales in South Africa'.¹¹⁶ Although it does not state that Campbell illustrated his account with objects, it seems very likely that he did, since his 1815 book includes illustrations of a number of objects he collected in South Africa (see Plate 30). The pattern established by Campbell, in which overseas missionary

¹¹⁶ Evangelical: October 1814, p.405, 'Bristol'

journeys were followed by speaking tours and the publication of a textual account, soon became an established practice among those associated with the LMS during the first half of the nineteenth century. In August 1825, just over four years after Campbell returned from his second South African journey, the missionary William Ellis (1794-1872) arrived back in England. Originally a gardener, Ellis had been sent to the Pacific in 1816, and had seen Pomare's 'family gods' while passing through Sydney in Australia, or Port Jackson as it was then called (Ellis, 1829: 269). From 1822 onwards, Ellis was associated with the establishment of missions in the Hawaiian Islands in collaboration with American Missionaries, but due to his wife's ill health, he had to return to London via North America. Nevertheless, his commitment to the missionary cause remained unwavering and shortly after his return he published an account of his tour in Hawaii (Ellis, 1826). He argued in this that the variety and decoration of *tapa* cloths from Hawaii not only showed invention and industry, but demonstrated that 'the people who manufacture it are neither deficient in taste, nor incapable of receiving the improvements of civilized society' (Ellis, 1826: 81). For those who might not be content to take his word on this, Ellis added a footnote suggesting that 'specimens of the principal kinds of native cloth, manufactured in the Sandwich Islands, may be seen in the Missionary Museum, Austin Friars' (Ellis, 1826: 81). The 1826 catalogue of the museum listed a number of items given by Ellis, many of which were displayed in a case together at the centre of the room.¹¹⁷ While Ellis' book directed its readers to the museum, the 1826 catalogue also referred to the book, suggesting visitors 'see his work lately published' for 'a longer account'.¹¹⁸ Just as supporters of the LMS could see objects in the LMS

¹¹⁷ Catalogue 1: p.46

¹¹⁸ Catalogue 1: p.46

museum that they may have been familiar with from missionary publications, such as *Missionary Sketches*, so the publications of individuals such as Ellis and Campbell were associated with the museum and its contents.

While in some cases these objects may only have become part of the LMS collection after the illustrations for publications had been prepared, in others the museum was the source of objects which became the principal illustrations in published works. Three years after he published his account of his tour through Hawaii, William Ellis published *Polynesian Researches* (Ellis, 1829). This included detailed descriptions as well as depictions of a range of Polynesian practices and artefacts, many of which came from the LMS museum (see Plate 31). Alongside preparing his books for publication, Ellis spent much of the five years after his return to England travelling all over the British Isles, promoting the work of the LMS as an agent. The degree to which this extended far beyond Independent churches in London can be appreciated from an episode that took place on 23 May 1829, recorded in an account of his life (Ellis and Allon, 1873: 119). Ellis and a number of other LMS representatives arrived at Enniskerry, a village outside Dublin on the Powerscourt estate, to address a missionary meeting at the local school. They were greeted by the rector and curate of the parish, who declared that although it was the quarterly meeting of (Anglican) Church Missionary Society (CMS), the day's collection would be given to the LMS. Having spoken about the work of the LMS in Africa, China and the South Seas, Ellis was presented with £13 collected from those present.¹¹⁹ This tour in Ireland was followed by one in Scotland, and it was only in

¹¹⁹ Afterwards, the missionary party was entertained by Lady Powerscourt, and met the family of Thomas Kelly, the prolific evangelical hymn writer. As a descendent of both these people (their children married), it was with some surprise that I came across this account.

1831 that Ellis was able to adopt a less itinerant lifestyle as the Foreign secretary of the LMS, when he became responsible for the museum and its collection.¹²⁰

Following Campbell's journeys of inspection to the South African missions in 1812 and 1819, the Directors of the LMS decided to conduct a tour of inspection. In 1821, George Bennet (1775-1841) from Sheffield and Rev. Daniel Tyerman (1773-1828) from the Isle of Wight, undertook to visit all of the society's mission stations. Bennet visited missions in the Pacific, Asia, Madagascar and South Africa, only returning to London in 1829, Tyerman having died at Madagascar in July 1828.

Officially:

The great objects of the Deputation will be, to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the state of the Missions, and of the islands; and to suggest, and, if possible, carry into effect, such plans as shall appear to be requisite for the furtherance of the gospel, and for introducing among the natives the occupations and habits of civilized life.

(Montgomery, 1831: vi)

As well as these official 'objects', it seems that the deputation were also expected to investigate religious practices in the Pacific, and in the process collect further objects for the museum. A note in the 1826 catalogue suggested 'It is probable that we shall be able to give a more particular description of the South Sea Idols, and other articles, on the return of the Deputation. Additional Specimens may also be expected'.¹²¹ Although the published account of this journey does not include any illustrations of artefacts (Montgomery, 1831), the later museum catalogue listed twenty objects given by Bennet, many in a separate case containing 'a very interesting collection of miscellaneous articles, principally obtained at the different Missionary stations during the visits of the deputation'.¹²² This included, among other

¹²⁰ He held this position for the rest of that decade.

¹²¹ Catalogue 1: p.22

¹²² Catalogue 2: p.43

things, 'the Breast-plate of Tamatoa, King of Raiatea', a 'Chinese mandarin's cap', a 'Malay Tambourine' and a 'Punqua from Benares'.¹²³

By the 1830s, it seems to have been expected that those returning from overseas mission stations would bring with them a range of objects which could illustrate their presentations and publications, and then become part of the LMS collection. This was certainly the case for John Williams (1796-1839) who returned to Britain in 1834 and spent several years promoting his work through speaking tours while preparing his *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises* for publication, and this included illustrations of a number of Pacific artefacts by George Baxter (see Plate 32, facing p.142). Shortly after Williams returned to the Pacific in 1838, Robert Moffat (1795-1883), who was originally accepted for missionary service alongside Williams in 1816, returned from South Africa. Although Moffat only originally intended to oversee the publication of his Setswana translation of the New Testament, he became involved in a round of promotional tours in Britain which kept him away from his mission at Kuruman for five years. Like Campbell, Ellis, Bennet and Williams before him, Moffat contributed a number of things to the Museum, some of which were illustrated in the account of *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* he subsequently published (see Plate 33). His availability in Britain as a speaker, at the time the details of John Williams' martyr's death became widely known, undoubtedly contributed to his widespread popularity and subsequent celebrity, a status marked by the colour print Baxter produced showing Moffat standing before an imaginary African landscape (Plate 34, facing p.144).

¹²³ Catalogue 2: p.43

Despite there being a close association between the promotional activities of those associated with the LMS, their publications, and the objects in the LMS museum, it does not appear to have been the case that all the items collected overseas by the missionaries and Directors of the LMS necessarily became part of the LMS collection. Ebenezer Prout (1843: 479-480), who assisted Williams with his book (Williams, 1837: xi), recalled Williams dressing up in a *tiputa* and speaking at length about the things he had brought from the Pacific, as noted in Chapter 1. He also remembered that 'In general, these interesting statements were crowned by a donation of some curiosity which had awakened special interest' (Prout, 1843: 480). Prout's experience of Williams giving away items he had brought from the Pacific must have been a personal one, since a club (274692), headrest (272978) and fish-hook (273036), now in the Field Museum in Chicago, have a provenance that links them to Williams via Prout. Williams seems to have distributed a number of the things from the Pacific as gifts, perhaps as a means of cementing relationships with his friends and supporters in Britain. The presentation of these items to Prout led to their preservation and display in the domestic space of the Prout family for nearly a century, and it is perhaps significant that as well as serving as illustrations in talks and publications by missionaries, items brought from overseas became the basis of domestic displays, through which relationships with absent missionaries were made visible.

Objects and Education

While not a missionary who had served overseas himself, Ebenezer Prout's engagement with artefacts was not limited to such personal relationships. As a

travelling agent of the LMS for six years prior to becoming Home Secretary in 1852, he seems to have used objects from the LMS collection in his promotional work. In autumn 1849, Prout arranged a series of lectures for children in London that were 'illustrated by a transparent missionary map of the world, of extraordinary size and great beauty, as well as by numerous Idols and other objects of Missionary interest'.¹²⁴ Though the speaker, Rev. C.H. Bateman, had some of his own 'gods', he borrowed a number of others from the LMS museum for the event.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, Bateman stressed that these props were used to 'give form and reality to what I am telling them, but never as the main themes of the meeting'.¹²⁶ He was concerned lest he be seen as 'a sort of puppet-show man' who was presenting a 'mere show and exhibition', preferring his events to be referred to as 'children's missionary meetings' at which he delivered an 'address' - terminology that came from the missionary meetings for adults addressed by Ellis, Williams and Moffat.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, advertisements for these events emphasized the 'large missionary map', as well as the 'rejected idols and various objects of interest from Missionary Stations', suggesting that these things were felt to hold a particular attraction for children.¹²⁸ Appealing to youthful supporters seems to have been a particular concern during the 1840s, a decade that had seen the launch of the John Williams missionary ship in March 1844, paid for by a children's appeal, and the subsequent establishment of the Juvenile Missionary Magazine (in June 1844).¹²⁹ The association between maps,

¹²⁴ CWM/LMS/Home/Incoming correspondence Box 9 1845-9, Folder 10. Draft letter from E. Prout dated September 1849

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ CWM/LMS/Home/Incoming correspondence Box 9 1845-9, Folder 10. Children's Missionary Meeting in aid of the LMS

¹²⁹ This rapidly achieved a circulation of 200,000. Juvenile: Volume 1 (1844), p.vi, 'Preface'

artefacts and children was strongly made in the various issues of this publication, and a short note in the February 1846 issue suggested that:

Every School should have a little Museum. It would gradually increase by the contributions of curiosities from friends, and interest very many young people.¹³⁰

In April 1850, Prout received a letter from E. Hebblethwaite in Sheffield, accompanied by 'a box containing sundry old idol Gods, and other articles which we had from your Museum some time ago'.¹³¹ Hebblethwaite asked for another parcel to interest 'village stations and Sabbath schools', but was evidently somewhat dissatisfied with the contents of the box he was returning, noting that:

We once had a number of Chinese Pictures, these are excellent things as they may be hung up in a large Room, and seen by considerable numbers, something of that sort are better than minute articles, which can be examined only by a few.¹³²

The supply of these boxes seems to have been such an established and ongoing practice by 1850 that Hebblethwaite had developed distinct preferences for particular kinds of objects. Indeed, such was the degree of circulation of items from the Mission House that even at the commencement of Prout's term as agent four years previously, objects from the collection risked being lost among the network of LMS supporters. A notice was printed in the *Chronicle* in April 1846, declaring:

Numerous articles, consisting of idols, natural curiosities, &c., have at various periods been lent to friends in the Metropolis and elsewhere, to be used for the purposes of illustration at public Missionary meetings, and on other occasions. As many of these have been long detained, and are frequently needed for the same purpose in other quarters, it is respectfully requested that early means may be adopted to return them to the Mission House.¹³³

¹³⁰ School here presumably refers to Sunday School. Juvenile: February 1846, p.44, 'Missionary Museums'

¹³¹ CWM/LMS/Home/Incoming correspondence Box 10, Folder 3. Hebblethwaite to Prout, 21 April 1850.

¹³² *ibid.*.

¹³³ *Chronicle*: April 1846, p.62, 'Notice Respecting Articles Lent from the Missionary Museum'

Although returning LMS missionaries frequently travelled around the British Isles with artefacts they had brought from overseas, exhibiting them at missionary meetings and sometimes distributing them as gifts, objects from the LMS collection evidently also circulated unaccompanied, continuing their missionary journeys alone.

Some of the items that found their way back to Britain as a consequence of missionary travels ended up in the LMS museum, but many others seem to have been regarded as the property of individual missionaries, and were disposed of in a variety of ways. A single individual such as George Bennet could collect things for the LMS museum at the same time as he created a personal collection and despatched material to others. Bennet sent back cases of things, whilst on deputation from 1823 onwards, with requests that they be sent to friends and relatives (Woroncow, 1981). Some of these were destined for the collections of the Leeds and Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Societies, but Bennet also returned with a collection of material that he travelled with and used when speaking about his experiences. In July 1835, six years after his return, Bennet donated 36 specimens of 'natural history', including wooden 'idols' from Tahiti and Burma, as well as a further 36 geological specimens to the newly founded Saffron Walden Museum (Pole, 1981). As well as these things, which he seems to have had with him, Bennet later sent three unaccompanied Pacific ironwood spears on a stage coach to Saffron Walden from his home in Hackney. Although seemingly fortuitous, this donation nevertheless related to the networks of support through which the LMS operated, since John Player, honorary curator of the Saffron Walden museum, had also been responsible for establishing the LMS auxiliary in the town (Cooper, 2000).

As voluntary organizations, 'Lit. and Phil' societies had memberships that overlapped with the LMS, and particularly with local missionary auxiliary societies. They can be regarded as entwined strands of an 'associational' culture that became particularly strong in Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century (Hilton, 2008: 169). Long before the deputation of Bennet and Tyerman, James Wilson, Captain of the Duff (the original LMS ship which sailed to Tahiti in 1796), made a 'very valuable present of various articles from the South Seas' to the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society (est. 1793) in 1799 (Jessop et al., 1998: vii). Artefacts collected in different parts of the world seem to have been regarded as contributing to the understanding of Natural Philosophy that it was the aim of these societies to pursue. Far from there being any sense that science and religion were competing pursuits, both appear to have been popular among the evangelicals from whom the LMS drew most of its support. Indeed, scientific pursuits seem to have been regarded as an important dimension of the 'civilization' that the LMS was attempting to develop alongside Christianity in other parts of the world.

By 1823, the Anglo-Chinese College, established by the LMS at Malacca in 1818, had a museum that included 'specimens of Natural History' as well as a range of artefacts that were 'illustrative of Chinese Customs'.¹³⁴ The college also had what it called 'Philosophical Instruments' that could be used for experiments including 'Globes, Electrical Machine and Battery, Chemical Apparatus, Air Pump, Barometer and Thermometer, &c'. In its provision of a scientific education, the Anglo-Chinese College appears to have owed rather less to contemporary Oxbridge colleges, with their literary and theological preoccupations, and rather more to Britain's dissenting

¹³⁴ Register: December 1823 (11), p.542-544

academies, where many LMS missionaries received their academic training. Although these Academies were formally independent, their links with the LMS were in many cases extremely strong. By training aspirant missionaries alongside candidates for the domestic ministry, such as Robert Morrison and James Angell James at the Gosport Academy, dissenting theological colleges enabled their students to establish bonds that would enhance the connections between overseas missions and British congregations.

The academy with perhaps the strongest and longest-lasting connections to the LMS was Cheshunt College. An office at the LMS headquarters in London was rented to Cheshunt from 1833 until 1891, and the college agreed to offer preliminary training to LMS missionaries from 1837 onwards (Orchard, 2011).¹³⁵ By the late nineteenth century, Cheshunt College had a museum that was known for its collection of missionary material. James Edge Partington's (1895) second series of the *Ethnographical Album of the Pacific Islands* listed a New Guinea war spear (153: 5), flint hand drill (175: 4), and hafted adze (182: 6) from the 'Missionary Collection Museum, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire'. These items seem to have been sent by the LMS missionary James Chalmers (1841-1901), a student at Cheshunt in the 1860s.¹³⁶ In 1875, Chalmers sent a barrel of native grown coffee from Rarotonga to Cheshunt, but must have supplied the New Guinea artefacts after he began working there in 1877.¹³⁷ It is not clear how extensive the museum at Cheshunt College was, but in 1891 the month after a donation of geological and mineralogical specimens, the

¹³⁵ WCA: Cheshunt College Minute Books: C1/17. Dated 16/2/1891 - History of Cheshunt. The LMS requested the return of these rooms in November 1891.

¹³⁶ Chalmers was a student at Cheshunt at the same time as R. Wardlaw Thompson (1842-1916), Foreign Secretary of the LMS between 1881 and 1914.

¹³⁷ WCA: Cheshunt College Minute Books: C1/12/238. Dated 15/5/1875

honorary curator requested additional space, as well as enhanced insurance.¹³⁸

When the remnants of this collection were sold in 1910, following the college's move to Cambridge, they included material from southern Africa, Madagascar, India, Tibet and Hawaii, as well as New Guinea.¹³⁹ Similarly, Western College in Bristol seems to have maintained a small 'missionary museum' until the early 1940s (Kaye, 1999: 172), and it is likely that other missionary training colleges may also have maintained collections of material alongside their libraries.

In this, British colleges continued to be paralleled by institutions that were established in connection with the LMS in other parts of the world. In 1902, the LMS supported the establishment of the Anglo-Chinese College at Tsientsin (Tianjin) in China, and in 1904 a public museum and library opened at the college which included both imported scientific equipment and locally collected material, like that at Malacca eighty years earlier.¹⁴⁰ According to a contemporary report, the museum was intended to:

open up to the Chinese student the wide field of study and discovery which Chinese thought takes no count of, as well as to encourage the partially foreign-educated Chinese to still further reading and investigation
(1905)

The museum's guidebook began by explaining that 'Museums have been built in many of the large towns in Western lands so that people by visiting them may be able to learn about important matters'.¹⁴¹ The college and museum were established by Samuel Lavington Hart, formerly a fellow at St. John's College Cambridge, and

¹³⁸ WCA: Cheshunt College Minute Books: C1/17. Dated 19/01/1891 and 16/02/1891.

As well as ethnological and geological specimens, the museum included a number of relics such as two dishes that belonged to the original founder of the college, the Countess of Huntingdon: WCA: Cheshunt College Minute Books: C1/17. Dated 19/03/1894.

¹³⁹ BM: Centre for Anthropology - Oldman Collection Purchase Books 1910

¹⁴⁰ This seems to have been common practice among a number of museums established by other missionary societies in mainland China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Smalley, 2010 pers. com.).

¹⁴¹ CWM Library Q231. Pamphlet: 'Guide to the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese Museum', p.i

the building was an architectural tribute to his *alma mater*. The museum also included a large number of photographs showing views of Cambridge, landmark buildings from across the British Isles, as well as a smattering of global landmarks such as the Egyptian pyramids. Somewhat bizarrely, these images lined the walls of a room that contained a range of scientific equipment including a 'Dynamo Electric Machine', 'Cinematograph' and 'Gramophone'. A surviving photograph of the museum's interior shows that over an archway, large letters exhorted visitors to 'Consider the Wonderful Works of God' (Plate 35). For Lavington Hart, a respected scientist before he became a missionary, there seems to have been as little contradiction between the pursuit of science and evangelical religion, as for his early nineteenth century predecessors who were members of both local LMS auxiliaries and Lit & Phil' societies.

Alongside collections of natural history and scientific instruments, the museum at Tsientsin also displayed a number of objects collected by James Chalmers in New Guinea. These things seem to have been arranged around a portrait of Chalmers, perhaps something of a shrine to the latest martyr missionary of the LMS (Chalmers was killed in New Guinea in 1901). The guidebook, however, hints at a more complicated rhetorical intention. Alongside these items, images were displayed of Vatorata College in New Guinea, the lecture hall of the LMS training institution in Rarotonga, as well as Rarotongan evangelists working in New Guinea. The text emphasized the Christian practices of those depicted, suggesting this 'enables us to understand what Christianity can do even for people who are quite savage'.¹⁴² Histories involving cannibalism were juxtaposed with the fact the New Guinea

¹⁴² CWM Library Q231. Pamphlet: 'Guide to the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese Museum', p.22

Christians now 'pray for China and the Chinese!'¹⁴³ Other images showed LMS colleges in Madagascar and India, all pointing to the transformations brought by the adoption of Christianity. This museum, established as part of an institution intended to educate the children of wealthier Chinese, seems to have been intent on demonstrating the promise offered by a community of global Christian fellowship. As such, the 'Hall of New Learning', as the museum was termed in Chinese, created a very different perspective from that established at 'Mission House' in London. Nevertheless, it is a reminder that material collected by missionaries, as well as moving from the peripheries to the centre of the network formed by the LMS, could also move from one mission field to another, bypassing the commanding position of 'Mission House' and its museum.

The Rise of the Missionary Exhibition

The circulation of objects from the LMS collection for use by supporters at meetings, talks and even during church services seems to have become well established across the British Isles as a practice during the first half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Rev. C.H. Bateman's reluctance to have his presentations in 1849 characterized as mere exhibitions is significant.¹⁴⁴ Although objects may have regularly been displayed as part of missionary meetings and addresses, these were not regarded primarily as exhibitions. Nevertheless, following the Great Exhibition of 1851, 'the exhibition' appears to have gained greater legitimacy as a mode of display in its own right in evangelical circles. One account has suggested that the first missionary exhibition in Britain was organized by the Church's Ministry to the Jews in

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ CWM/LMS/Home/Incoming correspondence Box 9 1845-9, Folder 10. C.H. Bateman to Prout, 21 September 1849

1867.¹⁴⁵ Possibly more significant however, at least in relation to the LMS, was their collaboration with a number of other Missionary Societies in the establishment of a Pavilion of *Missions Evangeliques Protestantes* at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, also in 1867 (Vernes, 1867). The LMS display, which was allocated a frontage of 40 feet, took its place alongside other British denominational societies, but also major Protestant missionary societies from across continental Europe and the United States.¹⁴⁶ Of 1522 numbered objects on display, 619 were supplied by the LMS (the next largest numbers are 256 from the Wesleyans and 209 from the CMS) (Vernes, 1867).¹⁴⁷ Although the 1867 Paris exposition may have been one of largest and grandest of loans of material from the LMS Museum during the second half of the nineteenth century (see Plate 36), it was by no means the only one. Indeed, the pattern of lending material for exhibitions seems to have become increasingly common as the century went on. In 1885, a loan collection was selected from among the objects in the LMS museum 'for exhibition at meetings of various kinds', as noted in the previous chapter.¹⁴⁸ In June 1894, the Home Secretary applied to the Home Board for permission 'to apply to missionaries in the field to secure curiosities for lending purposes and to pay the expenses of sending them to London.'¹⁴⁹ While the Home Board expressed a desire that Missionary Exhibitions should be held during

¹⁴⁵ CMS: A7: F.H. Reynolds (1939) Notes on the History of Missionary Exhibitions.

¹⁴⁶ The Wesleyan Missionary Society, The Baptist Missionary Society, the CMS, the Free Church of Scotland, as well as the Paris Missionary Society, the Moravian Missionary Society, the Dutch Missionary Society, the Basel Mission Society, the Danish Missionary Society, the Missionary Society of the American Episcopal Church, the American Association for Overseas Missions. The Religious Tract societies from London, New York and Paris as well as the Sunday School Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Bible Society of France, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews, the Bible Stand of London and the Salle Evangelique were all also represented.

¹⁴⁷ The objects on display seem to have been a subset of the LMS museum, and it has been possible to identify the numbered labels that were used to identify particular objects in a catalogue of the pavilion that was published in Paris.

¹⁴⁸ CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minute Book, Minute 99, February 27 1885 - Loan Museum

¹⁴⁹ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 8 (1889-1899) Box 46. 351 – 8. June 12 1894- 351 - 8

the centenary year of 1895, they stipulated that this was only to happen where 'local auxiliaries might be prepared to make the necessary arrangements' and 'on condition that the Society should not have any financial responsibilities in connection with them.'¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, during 1896 there were 150 loans of curios from the loan collection, and the LMS Home Secretary, Arthur Johnson, was said to be 'always ready to help friends to organize local Missionary exhibitions and meetings'.¹⁵¹

Nevertheless, it was the CMS that really developed the potential offered by the exhibition form. Small scale temporary exhibitions were organized by the *Missionary Leaves Association*, a body closely associated with the CMS, and the first of these was held in Cambridge in 1882. By 1908, Mr H.G. Malaher, secretary of the *Missionary Leaves Association*, is supposed to have organized over 90 exhibitions across the British Isles (Gardner, 1908: 8). Although the LMS did not benefit from the support of an equivalent organization, its auxiliaries and supporting churches continued to organize their own local exhibitions, borrowing material from Mission House, as they had done since the early nineteenth century. During the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the presumption that local auxiliaries should be responsible for missionary exhibitions was revised, and responsibility for organizing a series of coordinated missionary exhibitions was taken by employees of the LMS. An account by Rev. A.M. Gardner, the organizer of these, suggests that they were inspired by the success of an exhibition arranged at Norwich in 1903 by the North Norfolk Women's Auxiliary of the LMS (see Plate 37),¹⁵² which was visited by over

¹⁵⁰ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 8 (1889-1899) Box 46. 351 – 8. Nov 27 - 439 - 11

¹⁵¹ Chronicle: 1897, p.86, 'Workers and their Work, no. VI'

¹⁵² CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 31. Supplement to the Christian World, June 4, 1908, p. vi, 'How Missionary Exhibitions have grown' by Rev. A.M. Gardner

nine thousand people.¹⁵³ Having recently been appointed by the LMS as an organizing agent (Goodall, 1954: 544), Gardner was 'casting about for some method of appeal to our larger industrial towns'.¹⁵⁴ Encountering 'the effectiveness of it all as a means of acquainting people with the nature and methods and results of missionary work abroad', Gardner resolved to arrange a series of similar exhibitions.¹⁵⁵ He approached the LMS Home Board in early 1904 for support, and in June of that year an Exhibitions Committee was appointed.¹⁵⁶ Gardner approached Malaher at the Missionary Leaves Association for advice and guidance, but seems to have been concerned about whether a format developed in Anglican contexts would work when translated to the nonconformist context:

Could the few Congregational churches in a given town accomplish what three or four times as many Anglican churches, much stronger (numerically) and much richer (financially), found to demand all their resources and strength?¹⁵⁷

Gardner went ahead, and in November 1904 was granted £15 to obtain phonographic records from the field, £50 for the purchase of cinematograph films, and £50 'for obtaining articles from the Mission field suitable for exhibitions.'¹⁵⁸ In January 1905, the LMS Home Board authorized 'the display at missionary exhibitions of objects of interest from the Museum, and letters and other documents from the records of the Society, suitable provision being made for their careful preservation.'¹⁵⁹ Exhibitions were organized with the collaboration of local organizing committees in towns across Britain, who in at least one instance were keen that the

¹⁵³ Chronicle: 1903, pp.301-302, 'An Object-Lesson in Foreign Missions' by A. Worker

¹⁵⁴ CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 31. Supplement to the Christian World, June 4, 1908, p. vi, 'How Missionary Exhibitions have grown' by Rev. A.M. Gardner

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 53. 357 & 435

¹⁵⁷ CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 31. Supplement to the Christian World, June 4, 1908, p. vi, 'How Missionary Exhibitions have grown' by Rev. A.M. Gardner

¹⁵⁸ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 53. 535

¹⁵⁹ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 54. 18

LMS not only arrange for the provision of films, recordings and artefacts, but also send genuine converts to take part.¹⁶⁰ The first exhibitions organized in this way were held in Maidenhead and Blackburn during 1905, but between October 1905 and April 1908, exhibitions were organized on an increasingly large scale (see Plate 38, facing p.155). According to Gardner, each exhibition provided important experience:

Halifax taught us how to advertise the exhibition effectively, Rochdale how to rope in other Churches, Bristol and Wrexham how to organise the various departments, Manchester and Edinburgh how to train the stewards and to render the tableaux, Manchester and Swansea how to do all on a larger scale than ever previously attempted, and Sheffield how to plan the whole enterprise in a new way.¹⁶¹

The exhibitions also built on one another financially, since the profits of successful early exhibitions were used to purchase additional films and models,¹⁶² and in November 1907, £100 from exhibition profits was allocated to the purchase of additional curios.¹⁶³ The production of brochures and posters for future exhibitions was also funded in this way, and those that survive allow a good insight into the form taken by these exhibitions (see Plates 39 & 40, facing p.157).¹⁶⁴ Displays of material were organized into 'courts', each with a geographical focus that reflected the main LMS mission fields: India, China, Africa, South Seas, Madagascar and New Guinea. These contained:

Costumes, Ornaments, Pictures, Household Utensils, Arms, Idols, and other objects of interest illustrating the Daily Life, the Industries and Arts and especially the Idolatrous Worship and Superstitious Practices of the peoples represented.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 54. 24

¹⁶¹ CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 31. Supplement to the Christian World, June 4, 1908, p. vi, 'How Missionary Exhibitions have grown' by Rev. A.M. Gardner

¹⁶² CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 54. 51 & 136

¹⁶³ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 55. 416

¹⁶⁴ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 54. 111

¹⁶⁵ CWM Library R320. Pamphlet: 'Missionary exhibition, in the Town Hall, Rochdale, November 16th to 25th 1905'.

The displays were interpreted by missionaries and other stewards through talks and lantern slide demonstrations, and the courts also appear to have each featured maps showing the location of LMS mission stations. The overwhelming impression left by these exhibitions seems to have been the large numbers of objects on display. A newspaper report on the Rochdale exhibition in November 1905 suggests that it included 3000-4000 objects.¹⁶⁶ As well as those acquired for the purpose of exhibition, or loaned from the LMS museum, exhibitions also included objects loaned by supporters, often those local to the exhibition.¹⁶⁷ In addition to the geographically focussed courts, most exhibitions also had displays showing the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Colonial Missionary Society (see lower image, Plate 37, facing p.154), and some had a court showing the work of medical missionaries. Exhibitions also included themed sections for which there was an additional admission charge, such as an Indian Zenana, a Chinese Guest Room, a Malagasy Market, an African village and a model of the John Williams missionary ship. Charges were also made to attend the 'phonograph' and 'cinematograph' exhibitions. In addition, exhibitions involved the sale of goods made at overseas missions, as well as by supporters of mission at home. 'Sale of Work' stalls were manned by 'Ladies' from local churches, selling 'useful articles, curios, pottery, plain and fancy needlework &c.'¹⁶⁸ Particularly popular were the lace goods produced at LMS missions at Travancore in South India. However 'Chinese vases, idols and rice figures, horn and basket articles from Madagascar; Brass ware from Benares; Sandal

¹⁶⁶ CWM Library R320. Pamphlet: 'Missionary exhibition, in the Town Hall, Rochdale, November 16th to 25th 1905'. Excerpts on 'The Missionary Exhibition' bound into the programme 'Reprinted from the "Rochdale Observer," November 18th, 22nd, 25th, and 29th, 1905. p.1

¹⁶⁷ The Rochdale exhibition catalogue includes a list of 70 exhibitors, though in this case only 7 had Rochdale addresses. CWM Library R320. Pamphlet: 'Missionary exhibition, in the Town Hall, Rochdale, November 16th to 25th 1905'.

¹⁶⁸ CWM Library R320. Pamphlet: 'Missionary exhibition, in the Town Hall, Rochdale, November 16th to 25th 1905'.

Wood and Lacquered Boxes from Ceylon' were also popular.¹⁶⁹ The income from these stalls contributed to the profits of the exhibitions, which seem to have mostly been between £50 and £450. However, with attendance at a number of exhibitions as high as 20,000, Gardner was able to argue that 'the spiritual results far exceed the financial profits'.¹⁷⁰

The 'Orient in London' and after

The culmination of this series of exhibitions was the 'Orient in London', an exhibition at London's Agricultural Hall between 4 June and 11 July 1908 (Plate 41). This built on the model of previous exhibitions, but did so on a scale much larger than previously attempted.¹⁷¹ A pamphlet issued to mark the opening was hyperbolic:

The Orient in London is the first great Missionary Exhibition to be held in London, and, as becomes the World's Metropolis, it will be the largest, most representative and most variegated Missionary Exhibition ever held in the world. Visitors to The Orient in London are promised a panoramic scene of universal interest - a kaleidoscopic representation of the five continents and the seven seas. One day may be spent at The Orient with profit and pleasure, but a full week will not exhaust its wonders and its surprises.¹⁷²

The self-consciousness expressed about the 'world's metropolis' is fascinating, but it does seem to have been borne out in the scale of organization involved. Three thousand people attended on the first day, with a million visitors anticipated and special transport concessions available on the railways. Ten thousand volunteer stewards from churches across London (see Plate 42, facing p.159) were trained to 'explain the objects exhibited in the Courts, make the foreign scenes realities, give

¹⁶⁹ CWM Library Q225. Pamphlet: 'How to work a small missionary exhibition', p.5.

¹⁷⁰ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 54. 163

¹⁷¹ Because it was in London, a large sign advertising the exhibition was even erected on the outside of the Mission House.

¹⁷² CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 31. Pamphlet: The Orient in London, a great missionary exhibition, Agricultural Hall, June 4 - July 11 1908.pp.1-2

life to the relics and shed romance round the trophies'.¹⁷³ Each of the mission fields, which generally only had one dedicated court at earlier exhibitions, was expanded into multiple courts in the additional space available at the Royal Agricultural Hall. In the centre of the exhibition, an African Kraal and Indian village were recreated, with a Chinese house and pagoda at the centre (see Plate 41, facing p.158). As well as the main exhibition hall, the *Orient in London* featured the 'Hall of Religions', an attempt to show the development of religious ideas through a comparative approach. This included depictions of central Australian totemic practices, cattle sacrifice to the ancestors in southern Africa, the circulation of Muslims around *Ka'aba* at Mecca, a Chinese Buddhist temple, as well as Hindu religious practices (see Plate 46, facing p.174, for some of the imagery associated with this). Regular performances of the 'Pageant of Darkness and Light' rehearsed famous scenes from missionary history to a score of specially commissioned music alongside the exhibition. The idea of holding a missionary exhibition in the Agricultural Hall had originally come from Malaher, who had envisaged that it would be a collaboration between a number of missionary societies.¹⁷⁴ In the event, *The Orient in London* was organized solely by the LMS, and was 'the vastest enterprise of our own that we Congregationalists have ever seen' and Gardner predicted that 'it is probable that we shall never see its like again'.¹⁷⁵ This prophecy turned out to be true.

While the LMS may not have organized any other exhibitions on a similar scale, it does seem to have been imitated by other missionary societies. The CMS rose to the challenge, hosting an 'Africa and the East' exhibition in the Royal Agricultural Hall

¹⁷³ CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 31. Pamphlet: *The Orient in London*, a great missionary exhibition, Agricultural Hall, June 4 - July 11 1908. p.5

¹⁷⁴ CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 31. Supplement to the *Christian World*, June 4, 1908, p. vi, 'How Missionary Exhibitions have grown' by Rev. A.M. Gardner

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

the following year, and again in 1922 (Coombes, 1994: 165). The influence of *The Orient in London* was not limited to Britain, however, and in 1909, Wardlaw Thompson, LMS Foreign Secretary, received an enquiry from Rev. F.B. Haggard D.D. of the American Baptist Missionary Union about the LMS experience of missionary exhibitions.¹⁷⁶ In response, he suggested that while the provincial exhibitions had generally yielded a profit, the enormous cost involved in the 'Orient' had swallowed up all the receipts, but he nevertheless emphasised the amount that had been learned about the missionary movement by young people who had been trained as stewards.¹⁷⁷ In 1910, Gardner who had masterminded the LMS exhibitions, was invited to America to organise "The World in Boston: The First Great Exposition in America of Home and Foreign Missions", which took place between 22 April and 20 May 1911 at the Mechanics Building (1911a, Goodall, 1954: 544). This subsequently led to the establishment of a Missionary Exposition Company, and exhibitions in Cincinnati and Baltimore in 1912 and Chicago in 1913, and ultimately an enormous missionary exhibition in Columbus, Ohio during the summer of 1919, attended by over a million visitors (Anderson, 2006).

As well as attempting to appeal to large towns through missionary exhibitions, Gardner had also been concerned with appealing to supporters in rural areas of Britain while Organising Agent. He attempted to achieve this through the operation of a small fleet of caravans. The first of these was acquired in June 1905, with responsibility for it falling to the recently established exhibitions sub-committee.¹⁷⁸ The van became known as the Livingstone van, and between September 1905 and

¹⁷⁶ CWM/HOME/Outward Correspondence Box 2 1909-1910. Folder - April, May, June, December 1909. Thomson to Haggard, 18 May 1909.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 27 June 1905, 91. 'Missionary Van'; 25 July 1905, 110. 'Missionary Van'

April 1907 toured the villages of Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Norfolk, Northants, Warwickshire, Radnor, Breconshire, Monmouth and Glamorgan.¹⁷⁹ The van was associated with exhibitions and lantern lectures, but the missionary it carried was also responsible for holding missionary meetings, distributing missionary collecting boxes, and selling missionary literature to the rural population.¹⁸⁰ Unlike the exhibitions in larger towns, the van struggled to generate a profit.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, the success of the Wrexham exhibition in January 1907 resulted in the LMS being offered an additional caravan by the Wrexham auxiliary, 'intended for purposes of Foreign Missionary propaganda in the villages of England and Wales', and this became known as the 'John Williams' van.¹⁸² In October 1907, a 'Griffith John' van was added to the fleet, supported by the South Wales Auxiliary Committee.¹⁸³ Following a tour around Wrexham, Cheshire, Shropshire, Denbigh, Flint and Carnarvon, the 'John Williams' van travelled to London where it was a feature at the *Orient in London* exhibition.¹⁸⁴ It was touring Warwickshire in March 1909, when heavy snow meant that meetings had to be cancelled, and a photograph of the van in snow at Rubery, near Birmingham, was presumably taken at this time (see Plate

¹⁷⁹ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 19 December 1905, 163. 'Rev. A.W. Gardner, 1. Livingstone Van'. 24 April 1906, 232. 'Fund and Agency Committee: Livingstone Van', 8 April 1907, 350. 'Livingstone Van'

¹⁸⁰ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 24 April 1906, 232. 'Fund and Agency Committee: Livingstone Van', 8 April 1907, 350. 'Livingstone Van'

¹⁸¹ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 8 April 1907, 350. 'Livingstone Van'

¹⁸² CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 31. Printed programme from Thursday, June 18th 1908. CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 9 April 1907, 246. 'Gift of Missionary Van'

¹⁸³ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 5 May 1908, 484. 'John Williams Van'

¹⁸⁴ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 8 April 1907, 350. 'Livingstone Van'. 3.9 CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 31. Printed programme from Thursday, June 18th 1908.

43).¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, financial losses generated by the operation of the vans led to their de-commissioning and the sale of the 'John Williams' van in December 1911.¹⁸⁶

With Gardner, the force behind the development of both LMS exhibitions and Missionary vans, departed for America, the LMS did not entirely cease its involvement with exhibitions. It did, however, concentrate on smaller-scale exhibitions that would appeal to towns that had been too small for the exhibitions of the previous decade, but too large to have been visited by the missionary caravans. Despite the lack of profit generated by the *Orient in London*, the exhibition left a considerable material legacy that included many painted scenes and backdrops, for which a warehouse had to be hired in Kings Lynn in September 1908. While the score, scenery and the costumes of the 'Pageant of Darkness and Light' were re-used by Gardner in Boston (1911b), the modular nature of the exhibition courts made it possible for these to become part of smaller exhibitions in Britain. When Gardner left the LMS, he was effectively replaced by Neville Jones who became Assistant Home Secretary. While receiving his missionary training at the Yorkshire United College, Jones had been involved in organizing an exhibition in Bradford. In February 1910 a scheme for small exhibitions, put forward by Jones, was approved and the LMS issued a pamphlet: *L.M.S. Small Exhibitions: A New Fact*.¹⁸⁷ This suggested that 'it would be possible for a Church, or group of Churches, in any district, however isolated, to have a first-class Missionary Exhibition at a minimum cost'.¹⁸⁸ The example was given of the first successful small exhibition, held over two days at

¹⁸⁵ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 14 September 1909, 654. 'John Williams Van'

¹⁸⁶ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 10 December 1911, 344. 'John Williams Van'

¹⁸⁷ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 15 February 1910, 23. 'Small Exhibitions Scheme proposed'

CWM Library: Q220 'A new fact: L.M.S. small exhibitions'

¹⁸⁸ CWM Library: Q220. Pamphlet: 'A new fact: L.M.S. small exhibitions', p.1

Thame in Oxfordshire, a town with a population of 2911 and congregational church membership of 84 (see Plate 44). Nevertheless, this exhibition made a profit of £14, including curios sold for over £8.

Exhibitions were planned that would use the various existing courts in a modular way, and these could be hired individually, or as a group, to fill any space required (see Plate 44). During the first year of this arrangement, small exhibitions were held at Lewisham, Pendleton, Bury, Heckwondite, Blackburn, Hartlepool, Dudley and Devices, while 21 were organized in the 1912-13 year generating £820 of profit.¹⁸⁹ In September 1913, a report on exhibitions suggested that 'the one really permanent result of the Exhibitions' was the training of stewards, and that there had been increasing success among 'working-class churches'.¹⁹⁰ In addition, exhibitions were increasingly focussed on one mission field, with a number of courts being prepared about Africa and India. The success of the small exhibitions prompted the 'curios and costumes' available to be 'thoroughly overhauled, while fresh supplies have been written for from the various fields'.¹⁹¹ During March 1914, there were seven exhibitions in different parts of Britain, each lasting between 2 and 4 days. An optimistic article, written on the eve of the outbreak of war declared that 'never in the history of the Society has there been such a demand for exhibitions'.¹⁹² The LMS was able to offer 'courts, curios, stalls, maps, charts, diagrams, pictures etc. etc. representing the work in all LMS fields... together with the services of an exhibition manager to give counsel and take charge of the material'.¹⁹³ On a smaller scale, the

¹⁸⁹ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 53. 23 September 1913, 424 'Exhibitions'

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 53. 23 September 1913, 424 'Exhibitions'

¹⁹² Chronicle: September 1914, pp.208-109. 'Visualising the Foreign Fields - Our Exhibitions' - by Basil Mathews.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*

loan department was providing 'small sets of curios, with a lecture for each set'.¹⁹⁴

Around twenty exhibitions had been planned between October 1914 and May 1915, but many did not proceed as a consequence of the war.

While small scale loans seem to have continued for much of the twentieth century, and the LMS maintained a loan collection until it formally ceased to exist in 1966,¹⁹⁵ the responsibility for organizing and arranging these events, as well as shouldering the costs, seems to have been placed back onto local churches and their missionary auxiliaries after the efflorescence of missionary exhibitions during the first decade of the twentieth century. While the organization of events at which missionary collected objects were displayed during the mid-twentieth century came to resemble those of the mid-nineteenth century, they were increasingly supplemented by new forms of media, such as film, which had not been available to Campbell, Ellis, Williams and Moffat. In May 1933 the personal collection of the LMS missionary Rev. G.H. Eastman became the centrepiece of a three day Missionary Exhibition at Northgate Congregational schoolrooms, when talks about the exhibits were given by Eastman and his wife, and films were shown. Eastman's collection was subsequently given to the LMS, from whom it was transferred to the Horniman Museum in 1969. This example is suggestive of the way in which a private collection could be publicly displayed in support of the LMS, subsequently become the property of the LMS and

¹⁹⁴ Each set, including around fourteen exhibits plus photos and pictures, were available at a charge of 1s. 6d. for a day plus carriage each way. Chronicle: September 1914, pp.208-109. 'Visualising the Foreign Fields - Our Exhibitions' - by Basil Mathews. p.208

¹⁹⁵ The BM received material from the LMS in the 1930s still bearing labels from the exhibitions in the first decade of the twentieth century and between 1960 and 1971, the Horniman Museum (HM) received over 250 objects from the LMS and its successor the Congregational Council for World Mission, many of which were mounted on the labelled and numbered display boards they had been circulated on by the LMS loan department. One object received at the HM in 1960 still had an Orient in London label attached to it.

finally become part of the collection of a public museum, all during the middle decades of the twentieth century, long after the closure of the LMS museum in 1910.

Conclusion

While the 'missionary exhibitionary complex' was an early and important precursor to the exhibitionary forms that became widely established during the later part of the nineteenth century, it was also clearly connected to, and overlapped with, other contemporary practices involving exhibition and display. In Britain, these have a long history that connects them to histories of overseas voyaging. Both the Tradescant collection, around which the Ashmolean museum was established, and the Sloane collection, which formed the nucleus of the British Museum, contained a large number of curiosities that had been brought to Britain from overseas. Returning travellers and sailors not infrequently brought curiosities with them. A large number of objects seem to have been brought to Britain by individual missionaries as mementoes, some of which had their ultimate origins as gifts presented to them while working overseas.¹⁹⁶ In many cases these would have formed the basis of domestic displays, perhaps on the wall of a study or bedroom, reminding a returned missionary of their overseas connections. These displays might at the same time serve to remind visitors to these domestic spaces of the involvement of their occupants with overseas missionary work. A large Pacific fish hook, now in the Field Museum (273232), was retained by the LMS missionary W.W. Gill after he had donated the bulk of his personal collection to the BM, and was only sold by Gill's widow after his

¹⁹⁶ Stanley's work on the collection of the Melanesian Mission teacher Ida Wench, has shown that her collection included many objects that had been received as Christmas presents from students (Stanley, 1989).

death.¹⁹⁷ Another collection of material, amassed by William Kershaw, a sailor on the LMS ship John Williams I between 1851 and 1855, was retained by his descendants until 1949, when they donated it to the LMS.¹⁹⁸ As well as forming part of temporary displays in domestic spaces, some missionary collected objects became relatively permanent features in non-conformist chapels. The congregational chapel at Linton in Cambridgeshire, where the wife of one of John Williams sons came from, seems to have maintained a collection of exotic material until relatively recently.¹⁹⁹

These examples of individual collecting, domestic display, and personal exchanges with supporters are perhaps not unusual among those who travelled overseas during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Nevertheless, the transportation and display of objects by missionary societies and their agents appears to have assumed an additional significance because of their need to generate and maintain bonds of sympathy between supporters of mission at 'home' and the people among whom they worked 'overseas'. With a support base spread widely across the British Isles, the circulation and exhibition of objects became an important means of binding together the widely dispersed network on which the LMS depended. The movement of objects from the LMS collection around the country, to be displayed at talks, meetings and sermons, as well as at exhibitions, suggests that while the LMS headquarters and the museum were situated in London, the existence of these as central nodes nevertheless depended on the ongoing circulation of material, not only between Mission House and overseas missions, but also between Mission House and auxiliaries and supporting churches in Britain. This was the case throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although the first decade

¹⁹⁷ Field Museum, Chicago: Sonaband 8 (Feb 24, 1958) Counter number 386

¹⁹⁸ CWM/LMS. Museum Box 2. "Kershaw's" South Seas Collection of Implements, p.1

¹⁹⁹ Philip Wade pers. com. Email sent on 30 October 2010.

of the twentieth century stands out because of the active efforts made to involve the inhabitants of many of Britain's larger towns in the work of the LMS by staging major exhibitions.

Nevertheless, the way in which particular missionaries became well known was through their own circulation as part of extensive speaking tours, but also through the circulation of the books they wrote. Although missionary periodicals mostly circulated through networks of established supporters, the books that individual missionaries produced achieved significantly wider circulations. In the production of illustrations, the LMS were pioneers in the use of visual imagery in order to appeal to their supporters, and the close association with George Baxter's development of colour printing is just one example of this. Objects from the LMS collection were sometimes used as props to provide detail for the development of particular imaginative images, but they were frequently also pictured simply as indexes of themselves. Although images of 'idols' had a particular appeal, a number of publications associated with the LMS also included images of artefacts that were simply illustrative of the things produced by the people among whom missionaries worked. Nevertheless, representation of these objects in two-dimensional, and therefore infinitely reproducible form, allowed objects from the LMS collection to achieve an extensive circulation, as what Alfred Gell (1998: 13) called 'indexes'.

Coombes (1994) considered the missionary exhibitions of Late Victorian and Edwardian England as part of a range of new leisure opportunities for the British middle and working classes, and as somewhere that a popular knowledge of Africa and the African was developed that differed to that of contemporary academic anthropology. While it is useful to consider missionary exhibitions in late nineteenth

and early twentieth century in relation to contemporary forms of display, and as part of what Bennett called the 'exhibitionary complex', I have attempted to situate missionary exhibitions in relation to practices of display that were more specific to the missionary context, and originated before the Great Exhibition on 1851. While Coombes suggested that popular forms of knowledge were alternatives to anthropology, and emphasized the way that the 'Orient in London' drew on anthropological knowledge in its 'Hall of Religion', I hope to have suggested that it might be possible to reverse the direction of this influence.

Missionary practices of display predated and informed anthropological practices as these emerged in ethnographic museums during the later nineteenth century. Indeed, the displays that took shape in many regional museums at this time, drawing as they did on collections formed by 'Lit. And Phil.' societies earlier in the century, arguably had more in common with the display practices of the 'missionary exhibitionary complex' than they did with the innovations developed by professionals at University and National museums. The 'trophies' and 'curios' that featured in missionary exhibitions frequently passed in a fairly unmodified manner into ethnographic displays without always being obviously re-classified as 'artefacts' or 'specimens'.

Chapter 5

Dispersal

Objects of Anthropological and Missionary Interest

How to keep some things out of circulation in the face of all the pressures to give things to others is the unheralded source of social praxis.

*Annette Weiner, Inalienable Possessions*²⁰⁰

On 25 May 1910, Neville Jones (1880-1954), Assistant Home Secretary of the LMS (1909-12), wrote to Thomas Athol Joyce (1878-1942), assistant to Charles Hercules Read (1857-1929), Keeper of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography at the British Museum:

As you will no doubt remember we have carefully saved from the breaking up of the museum all the historical relics in connection with our Society, and these we are intending to put in a glass case in one of our committee rooms. Can you recommend me a good case maker who is reasonable in his charges and reliable in his work?²⁰¹

Earlier that month, Joyce had assisted Jones in allocating prices to the items from the LMS museum that had not been selected for the BM, so that they could be sold.²⁰² Although Joyce's reply does not survive, it is clear from another letter written by Jones two days later that Joyce had responded about the glass case. He also seems to have informed Jones about a connection between a 'little steatite seal' and Robert Morrison, the early LMS missionary in China. Jones responded:

²⁰⁰ (Weiner, 1992: ix-x)

²⁰¹ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence: 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 25 May 1910.

²⁰² BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence: 1910, K-L box. Wardlaw Thompson to Read, 14 May 1910.

I need hardly say that since its association with Morrison has been proved, we should very much like to include it amongst the relics of our missionaries which we are shortly going to arrange. At the same time we should like to thank you for your kindness in offering it to us, and we shall look upon it as a gift from you. Certainly, had it not been for you, it is not likely that it would have been preserved, as no-one in this house had any notion as to its nature.²⁰³

This suggests that the seal was in Joyce's possession, most likely as part of the selection made of things from the LMS collection for the BM. This example demonstrates how easily objects could move from having no 'missionary interest' and being regarded as alienable and worthy of dispersal, to be considered a relic, preserved in a glass case in the LMS committee room. Nevertheless, given that the connections between most of the objects in the LMS museum and the missionaries who collected them had been forgotten by 1910, this treatment was the exception rather than the rule. In Jones' letter to Joyce, he wrote:

We have made a clearance of practically everything in the museum now. The mass of stuff, after you had taken your selection, was bought by Mr Balfour [Pitt Rivers] and Dr Harrison [Horniman Museum]. Mr Fuller, who was a Dulwich boy during my time, came and took away a lot of stuff, and we had many pleasant chats about old masters... All that is left of the stuff, which is very little, is going to be sold at Stevens on the 31st inst...²⁰⁴

Although Joyce was a museum curator and Jones a missionary, the two men had a great deal in common. Both came from very similar backgrounds, having been students at Dulwich College in South London. Prior to his theological training, Jones had worked in northern Madagascar as a mining engineer for three years, and balanced his missionary enthusiasm with an interest in archaeology and a private collection of stone tools. Joyce, as well as working at the BM, also seems to have acquired objects in a personal capacity. Following his visit to the LMS collection

²⁰³ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence: 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 27 May 1910.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

Jones wrote asking for his private address 'so that I might send you your gong'.

Along with this, Jones sent a 'little mallet' he had discovered which he thought would make a good gong-beater.²⁰⁵

In September 1910, Jones sought Joyce's assistance to sell his collection of 'flint implements' in advance of his marriage since 'My lady love is not particularly sweet on them and I, personally have reached a stage when I can live without amassing a collection & yet be happy!'²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, in 1932, twenty years after Jones was posted to Hope Fountain Mission in what is now Zimbabwe, he presented his personal collection of African stone tools to the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, where it became the basis of the museum's archaeological collections (Clark, 1955: 5). Four years later, in 1936, Jones was appointed Keeper of the Department of Antiquities at the museum, a post he held until retirement in 1948. The life of Neville Jones, as a missionary, and later professional museum curator and anthropologist, when considered alongside the Steatite seal, presumably returned to the LMS from the BM, is suggestive of the various ways in which the differentiation between missionary interests and anthropological interests remained far from clear during the first half of the twentieth century. The transactions surrounding the closure of the LMS museum and the dispersal of its collection reveal a great deal about the ways in which the network of the LMS overlapped with other spheres of activity, and particularly the development of anthropology as a professional pursuit.

²⁰⁵ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence: 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 3 May 1910.

²⁰⁶ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence: 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 16 September 1910.

A Sphere of Exchange

While the previous chapters considered the formation of a collection at the LMS museum and its circulation in relation to what I have called the 'missionary exhibitionary complex', this chapter explores the processes through which this collection was dispersed. Considering the establishment of this collection in relation to particular 'moving objects' has made it possible to gain a sense of the changing shape of the LMS during the middle of the nineteenth century. In the same way, their transfer into other collections offers a way of exploring the changing institutional landscape in which the LMS operated during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. If the LMS is understood as an actor-network, composed of connections between both nonhuman and human components, then the dispersal of objects from its collection involves something of a dissolution, or at least reconfiguration of the society as an assemblage. This reconfiguration took place through a series of exchanges, in which things were transferred from the possession of one actor to another. Just as the collecting of museum objects has been considered in terms of transactions and acts of exchange (Gosden and Knowles, 2001), the dispersal of collections can also be considered in relation to the actors involved, and the relationships mediated by particular acts of exchange.

Indeed, there is a degree to which the exchange of ethnographic objects during the early twentieth century might be considered as constituting a 'sphere of exchange', similar in many ways to the Kula ring described by Malinowski (1922). While those involved were British, rather than Trobriand Islanders, they were generally men, and from a particular upper-middle class background. In vying to obtain possession of particular valued objects, often associated with histories of

overseas travel and exchange, they sought to improve their own prestige through possessing them. Representatives of the LMS, with whom they engaged to acquire things, often came from very similar backgrounds, sometimes having attended the same schools and universities. As well as private collectors who accumulated collections in their own right, such as A.W.F. Fuller, a number of those involved in these exchanges regarded themselves as professionals. This meant that they acquired things as representatives of the institutions in which anthropology was finding its first home as a professional pursuit - national and university museums. Nevertheless, the ways in which these salaried curators accumulated material was not at all unlike the collecting practices of amateurs. Indeed, the distinction between amateur and professional collectors was a very fluid one, with many professionals maintaining private collections, and a number of private collectors assisting with the curation of public collections. Amateurs and professionals frequently exchanged material with one another, and while both individual and institutional collectors sought to improve their collections through judicious exchanges, they also seem to have been concerned to prevent material circulating outside of a fairly small group they recognized as constituting this sphere of exchange.

At the same time, material has to enter any sphere of exchange from somewhere. Unlike German museums during this period, the majority of ethnographic collections in England were not formed through the unmediated forms of exchange involved in collecting expeditions in the field (Gosden et al., 2007, Penny, 2003). Rather, it seems that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, missionaries and missionary institutions were an important conduit for material for collectors of ethnographic material. Material that had found its way to

Britain through missionary networks became an important contributor to the formation of many collections at public museums in Britain. The relationships between missionaries and anthropologists have been considered in terms of the exchange of information (Stocking, 1995), the emergence of fieldwork-focussed anthropology in the twentieth century (Harries, 2005, Herle and Rouse, 1998), and to a limited extent the exchanges between individual missionaries and individual anthropologists (Gardner, 2006: 130, Gosden et al., 2007: 60, 62, 160-161). The question of exchanges between missionary institutions such as the LMS, and museums has been less explored. By attending to the practices involved in the display, and particularly the cataloguing and labelling of the things involved in exchanges between the LMS and collectors of ethnographic material, I intend to examine the continuities between established missionary practices, and those that emerged in anthropology as a scientific, and nominally secular practice. The transfer of objects from the longest established and best-known missionary museum to recently founded public museums in the early twentieth century is an important moment in the fairly gradual process through which expertise and authority about the non-European world transferred from the missionary to the anthropologist.

While remotely situated missionaries supplied information to a small number of metropolitan intellectuals during the nineteenth century, this pattern began to be reversed during the twentieth century, when anthropologists, such as A.C. Haddon, lecturer in Ethnology at the University of Cambridge from 1900, increasingly supplied information to missionaries in the form of both publications and training. In October 1905, following the relocation of Cheshunt College to Cambridge:

It was decided that Dr Haddon should be invited to lecture on Anthropology at Cheshunt College with a special view of giving the missionary students a knowledge of the different races of mankind with which they might meet.²⁰⁷

In subsequent years, Haddon invited students from Cheshunt to attend his lectures at the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Haddon was even invited to contribute to the arrangement of the *Orient in London* exhibition in 1908, and his influence is apparent from an image showing a reconstruction of Malu ceremonies in the Torres Strait, which was presented in the 'Hall of Religions' as an example of 'Hero worship' (Plate 46). The *Handbook to the Hall of Religions*, in which Haddon wrote an 'Introduction to some Primitive Forms of Religion', began by suggesting that one of the 'Objects of the Hall' was 'to suggest that enthusiasm for Christian Missions is consistent with a sympathetic and intelligent study of other religions'.²⁰⁸

Nevertheless, in Haddon's contribution, he emphasized the gulf that separated anthropologically informed understandings of non-Christian religions from the way in which the LMS museum had presented these half a century earlier, stating that:

It is a common error to regard all representation of the human form as *idols* which are worshipped on account of their own power. Probably such a belief rarely occurs except in the ignorant minds of white men.²⁰⁹

Nevertheless, the sophisticated presentations of non-Christian religions in the *Hall of Religions* apparently did not prevent the organizers of the *Orient in London* exhibition from creating a diorama in the main part of the exhibition, simply entitled 'Idolatry' (see Plate 46).

²⁰⁷ WCA: Cheshunt College Minute Books: C1/19/147. Dated 26/10/1905

²⁰⁸ CWM Library Q202. 'The Orient in London: handbook to the hall of religions', ed. Rev. D. Macfadyen, London: Morton & Burt

²⁰⁹ CWM Library Q202. Pamphlet: 'An introduction to some Primitive Forms of Religion' by Alfred C. Haddon, in 'The Orient in London: handbook to the hall of religions', ed. Rev. D. Macfadyen, London: Morton & Burt. p.12

Haddon was one of the first professional anthropologists whose reputation depended largely on his experience of fieldwork in the Torres Straits in 1888 and 1898 (Byrne, 2011). His access to the field, however, was largely made possible through his contacts with LMS missionaries (Herle and Rouse, 1998: 13), with whom he was connected through membership of the congregational church (Quiggin, 1942: 90). Haddon appears to have had a particularly good relationship with James Chalmers, who told him in a letter that 'I am sorry with a big, big sorrow that I did not take up Anthropology on my arrival in New Guinea.....'²¹⁰ Both men also had strong relationships with the missionary ethnographer, William Wyatt Gill, who initiated missionary work in the Torres Strait (Quiggin, 1942: 20). While Gill might have been an anthropologist rather than missionary had he been Haddon's age, it is hard not to feel that Haddon might easily have been a missionary, had his opportunities for scientific study been more limited. The close connections between anthropologists and missionaries in the early twentieth century, and the processes by which they came to be differentiated from one another can be explored through the biographies of men like A.C. Haddon and Neville Jones, but they are also evident in the transfer of objects from the LMS collection to those of the new anthropological museums.

Permanent Loan?

Many objects were transferred straightforwardly from missionary collections to anthropological ones as part of the exchanges that surrounded the closure of the LMS museum, although a number of things such as the steatite seal from China were retained because they were seen as intimately connected to the history of the

²¹⁰ CUL: Haddon papers. Chalmers to Haddon, 5 January 1889

society. Distinguishing between alienable property and 'inalienable possessions' (Weiner, 1992) involved establishing a distinction between objects of 'missionary interest' and those primarily of 'anthropological interest', and by implication between the interests of anthropologists and missionaries. A great deal of this differentiation centred around the connections that particular objects had to famous LMS missionaries, and was closely connected to the rise of something that approached a cult of relics at the LMS during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the same time, the differentiation between alienable and inalienable objects does not seem to have been an absolute or obvious distinction. The ways in which some things were transferred to other museum collections allowed certain objects to be 'kept-while-given', through the imposition of a range of conditions in relation to these transactions. These asserted that the material involved was inalienable, at the same time as it was transferred to the custody of others. In many ways, these transactions blended gift-giving with forms of contract more commonly associated with exchanges involving commodities.

Following the appointment of Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826-1897) as the first Keeper of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography at the BM in 1866, Franks and later Charles Hercules Read (who was his assistant after 1874 and his successor in 1896) worked tirelessly to establish what, towards the end of his life, Franks called 'a collection of considerable size, one of the best in Europe, and such as ought to be in the National Museum of a country like England' (Franks, 1997: 320). This was in marked contrast to displays in the 'Ethnographical Room' before Franks was appointed, which were regarded as something of a national

embarrassment (1848, Altick, 1978).²¹¹ In the context of this active programme of acquisition and collection-building at Bloomsbury, the LMS collection, less than three miles away at Blomfield Street, was of considerable interest to both Franks and Read. In March 1890, the LMS Directors succumbed to the Read's overtures, and agreed:

to lend under certain conditions objects of interest from the Society's Museum for exhibition at the British Museum; they feel that they will thus be made more widely useful in diffusing information concerning and exciting interest in the various countries from which they have been brought.²¹²

While this loan arrangement might be seen as the beginning of the end for the LMS museum (Seton, forthcoming), it seems unlikely that it was regarded in this way at the time. The form of words quoted above makes it clear that the display of these 'objects of interest' at the BM was felt to serve the purposes of the LMS by allowing them to be seen by a larger audience than would have come to the LMS museum, by then on the top floor of Mission House.

A report from the LMS literature committee a month earlier had recommended that the Directors agree:

to hand over...as a Permanent Loan....such objects from the Society's Museum as may be mutually agreed upon, on the understanding that every article so lent be distinctly labeled as lent by the London Missionary Society.²¹³

The Directors only agreed to this proposal on condition that the words 'make a permanent loan under certain conditions' were substituted for 'to lend under certain

²¹¹ The establishment of this collection was largely made possible through a bequest from the Quaker industrialist and ethnologist Henry Christy, who died in 1865. As well offering his personal collection to the BM, Christy provided £5000 a year to purchase of additional specimens, and it was Christy's bequest which enabled Franks to have the department established of which he became keeper see Wingfield (2011b: 6).

²¹² CWM/LMS. Home Board Minutes. FBN 7 (1877- 1890) Box 44 p.450, Wednesday 19th March 1890

²¹³ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 7 (1877- 1890) Box 44 p.432 February 20th 1890

conditions'. This arrangement seems to be a good example of what Annette Weiner (1992) has called 'keeping-while-giving', since the LMS Directors were clearly anxious to retain a degree of control over the items involved. In June 1890, the Literature Committee recommended that in addition to being labelled as 'Lent by the London Missionary Society', 'the South Sea Island deities & other unique objects' from the LMS museum 'be placed together in a separate case'.²¹⁴ While it seems to have been understood that this was a long-term agreement, those acting on behalf of the LMS were concerned to emphasize that the items being loaned had not been alienated from the LMS as property. By clearly marking the objects with the society's name, and displaying them separately from the rest of the BM's collection, their ongoing association with the LMS could be made clear. At the same time, the LMS Directors were keen to gain a degree of prestige through having their property displayed in the BM, where the ethnographical collections were displayed in newly arranged galleries at Bloomsbury, recently vacated following the departure of the natural history collections to South Kensington in the early 1880s.

Read, who negotiated the loan for the BM, seems to have been pleased with the outcome, declaring in print shortly afterwards that 'the most important and valuable section' of the LMS museum had been 'transferred to the custody of the Trustees of the British Museum' (Read, 1892: 31). The motivations of Franks and Read emerge more clearly from internal documents at the BM, such as a request that the museum's Trustees sanction the proposed loan:

Mr Franks has the honor to report that the LMS possesses a number of ethnographical specimens which can scarcely be said to be exhibited at their premises in Blomfield Street E.C...

²¹⁴ CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minutes/Box 1 1866-1915, p.143 June 13th, 1890.

It has long been felt by ethnologists that some portion of this collection should be transferred to the BM and for some years Mr Franks has been in communication with persons connected with the society on this subject.²¹⁵

The suggestion that the LMS could ‘scarcely be said to be’ exhibiting the objects, can be read as Franks exerting his professional status and expertise in order to demonstrate that his department at the BM would be a far more appropriate home for such a unique and valuable collection. The BM database records 241 objects that formed part of this loan in 1890, overwhelmingly made up of Polynesian objects (234), many of them ‘idols’ (60), but the loan also included seven objects from other parts of the world.²¹⁶ These included two Madagascan spears and a shield, a club and a rattle from Guiana, as well as a string of ostrich eggshell beads from southern Africa, together with a model Tswana hut made by Robert Moffat. The Directors of the LMS, in acquiescing to this loan, signalled a shift in the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists, who had begun to establish a distinct identity in relation to collections of material from overseas. Another sign of this changing attitude is a recommendation by the literature committee, following the loan in June 1890, that the Foreign Secretary be authorized ‘to sell for the Society such objects from the Museum as are without any special missionary interest’.²¹⁷ There is little evidence that much was sold at this time, suggesting perhaps that the definition of ‘missionary interest’ remained fairly open in 1890.

Despite this loan, the LMS continued to be strongly associated with things from other parts of the world in the years after 1890. It remained the practice of the Directors to adjourn ‘to the Museum for tea’ after their meetings, and following the

²¹⁵ BM: “Book of Presents, Supplement Vol II (Jul 1890 – Dec 1896) - 28 Feb 1890

²¹⁶ These were originally given the numbers LMS.1-230 (some of these have subsequently been subdivided and given multiple database records).

²¹⁷ CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minutes/Box 1 1866-1915, p.143 June 13th, 1890.

departure of objects to the BM, £25 was made available for the re-arrangement, re-cataloguing and re-cleansing of the museum.²¹⁸ In January 1891, the Foreign Secretary announced that the re-arrangement of the museum had been completed, and invited members of the literature committee to proceed to the museum to 'see the improvements introduced'.²¹⁹ In February 1891, the Home Board decided to 'adopt a more modern shape and get up' for the *Chronicle*, 'with a view to more effective illustration and an enlarged circulation'.²²⁰ As a result, its cover between 1892 and 1900 featured a banner design dominated by exotic artefacts, albeit with a bible at the centre, illuminated by heavenly rays (see Plate 47). Many of the items pictured originated in the Pacific, but the inclusion of palm leaves, coconuts, two ivory tusks and a tiger's skin create the sense of a crowded Victorian parlour, presumably not unlike the LMS museum itself. Shortly afterwards, *News from Afar*, the re-named *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* was bound into an annual cover featuring a similar treasure trove of exotic curiosities (Plate 47). The prominent association made by these images between the LMS and overseas objects suggests that the best way to understand the 1890 BM loan may be in relation to a shorter term loan of 'African curiosities' to the *Stanley and African exhibition*, the following month.²²¹ Through association with such high profile exhibitions, the Directors of the LMS presumably hoped to gain prestige, or at least a recognition of sorts for the LMS. The catalogue of the Stanley and African exhibition suggests that it was predominantly concerned with 'the romantic history of the Dark Continent' (Stanley and African Exhibition,

²¹⁸ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 7 (1877- 1890) Box 44 p.372, October 28th 1889 * p.431, February 10th 1890

²¹⁹ CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minutes/Box 1 1866-1915, p.146 January 8th, 1891.

²²⁰ CWM/LMS/Home/Board Minutes. FBN 8 (1889-1899) Box 45. 9 February 1891.

²²¹ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 7 (1877- 1890) Box 44 p.446-447, 10 March 1890

1890: 6), though it turned out to be a controversial event (Pettit, 2007: 197).

Nevertheless, its committee, at least on paper, included representatives from a number of missionary societies, as well as Read from the BM.

At the same time, Read emphasized his status as a professional in the 1892 article quoted above, as a justification for the transfer of material from the LMS collection to the BM. Even though it was published in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, an institution that included a number of LMS missionaries in its membership, Read argued that:

An ethnographical museum... requires constant care for its proper preservation, and this it is only likely to obtain where the custody of the specimens is a principal object of the institution. Obviously the officers of the London Missionary Society have other and more important duties than keeping watch over the condition of the specimens liable to deterioration in their museum, and the museum thus took a distinctly secondary place.
(Read, 1892: 139-140)

Nevertheless, Read acknowledged the value of its collection to the LMS, suggesting that the Directors of the Society 'not unnaturally hesitated in parting with objects which were, in a sense, landmarks in their history, and connected with the missionary successes of some of their most distinguished workers' (Read, 1892: 139). According to Read, the part of the collection which formed the bulk of the 1890 loan was 'that formed by the pioneers of the Society, Ellis, Williams, Tyerman, Bennet, and others, during their residence among the islands of the Eastern Pacific' (Read, 1892: 139). At the same time, he was clear that 'the ethnological importance of these specimens' did not derive from these connections. Instead it related 'in the first place to their intrinsic merits, and in the second to the fact that at the time they were obtained the religions and habits of the natives had been but little disturbed by European influence' (Read, 1892: 139). In the process of becoming ethnographic objects at the

BM, there was something of a reversal in the significance of these objects. While Read recognized the 'heritage value' that the objects held through their connections to famous LMS missionaries, he simultaneously suggested that 'the ethnological importance of these specimens' was not connected to their origins in missionary endeavour. Rather than providing evidence for successful evangelization through their presence in London, the objects transferred to the BM provided evidence of life in Polynesia prior to missionary influence. In some ways, this is not unlike the claim that the LMS museum showed 'what men are without the Gospel'.²²² By contrast, what was considered to be of missionary interest, at least by Read, were the ways in which objects in the collection related to the history of the society, and particularly to certain famous missionaries. This attitude does not seem to have been restricted to the LMS during the 1890s, since the Stanley and African Exhibition catalogue also emphasized that exhibits in the 'native section', apart from:

showing the manner in which the negroes live, have an added interest in having been in a considerable degree collected by well-known travelers and missionaries during famous expeditions.

(Stanley and African Exhibition, 1890: 6)

While the interest shown in missionary collected objects by Read at the BM, as evidence of undisturbed 'primitive' life, differed from the way their significance was perceived in missionary and other contexts in 1890, in many ways it was closer to the ways in which these things had originally been used. Artefacts from the LMS collection were mostly originally collected to provide visual evidence of life in non-Christian parts of the world, both through their depiction in missionary publications, and through display in the museum and elsewhere. By 1890, however, these objects had become evidence that originated in an earlier time as well as a distant place.

²²² Juvenile: 1860 (17), p.12, 'The Missionary Museum'

The Rise of the Missionary Relic and the Demise of the Missionary

Museum

During the LMS centenary year in 1895, a celebration was arranged at Crystal Palace for London Sunday Schools. As well as a choir competition, addresses by missionaries, and the launch of a model of the S.S. John Williams into the central fountain, the Egyptian court was taken over for the day for a missionary exhibition (see Plate 48). Photographs of the event suggest a hastily mounted series of displays relating to the society's mission fields with monumental Egyptian figures in the background. What is particularly significant about this exhibition, however, is the way in which it is described in the *Chronicle*:

...a valuable collection of missionary relics and curiosities from the Society's Museum at the Mission House, with others lent by missionaries, were effectively displayed....Altogether this interesting exhibition comprised upwards of 2,000 objects, and was well representative of the different fields in which the Society has laboured, and of its most prominent agents.²²³

Special attention was given to describing 'the personal relics of the martyr of Erromanga', John Williams, which included a telescope and a watch and chain he had hung up in the Camden before landing on the island where he was killed.²²⁴ By the late nineteenth century, the LMS had begun to use its own history, as well as its association with famous missionary heroes such as Williams, as one of the main ways in which it promoted itself. While the first history of the LMS by William Ellis (1844) was published on the eve of its first half century, it appears to have been the centenary that marked a real rise in the society's sense of itself as an historic

²²³ *Chronicle*: September 1895, pp.236-7, 'Children's Centenary Demonstration at the Crystal Palace', p.237

²²⁴ *Chronicle*: September 1895, pp.236-7, 'Children's Centenary Demonstration at the Crystal Palace', p.237

institution, but also of its museum collection as a document of that history. In his 1898 article 'Responsibilities of a Great Heritage', which was re-printed and circulated as a pamphlet, Wardlaw Thompson used the society's illustrious past to imply a continued responsibility for future action.²²⁵

A profile of the LMS museum in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, as part of a series on lesser known museums during 1899, immediately connected the museum with a century 'of propagation of the Gospel among the heathen' (Plate 49)(Gordon, 1899: 81). The society is referred to in the past tense as having:

materially assisted in the suppression of unspeakable cruelties among savage races, and in opening up countries to the traveller and trader which a hundred years ago were a *terra incognita* to the civilised world.

(Gordon, 1899: 88)

The first object mentioned by the article was 'a piece of ships' biscuit' from the first night's supper aboard the *Duff*, which could be found 'amongst many relics in the museum' (Gordon, 1899: 81). The article went on to describe and illustrate a 'Devil Dancer's mask from New Guinea' and a 'medicine man's basket' from Central Africa as examples of items in a room 'containing... primitive specimens of savage skill and savage superstition' (Gordon, 1899: 82-85). It also mentioned two other rooms 'the walls of which are lined with symbols of the religious systems which... oppose an almost insurmountable barrier to progress in the east' (Gordon, 1899: 85). These rooms were dedicated to illustrating religious paraphernalia from India, China and Japan, none of which had been transferred to the BM in 1890. Nevertheless, the article ended in a similar vein to that with which it began, connecting the museum to further relics and trophies of the society's history:

²²⁵ CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minutes/Box 1 1866-1915. p.237, 29 September 1898 'Responsibilities of a great heritage'

Last but not least, among these relics and trophies of a hundred years' war with barbarism and superstition is an autograph draught written and signed by a good and honoured soldier in the fight, David Livingstone, whose lonely grave lies far away on the southern shores of Lake Bemba, in the very Heart of Darkest Africa.

(Gordon, 1899: 88)

Another account, written a few years later, also connected the LMS, and its 'grimly interesting' museum with Livingstone, as well as with 'other famous men such as John Williams, Moffat, Morrison (the first missionary to China), and Chalmers of New Guinea' (Roberts, 1903: 280). The image published alongside this article (see Plate 49, facing p.185), shows a case with a title 'Ships' above it, displaying models of missionary ships, which had long been a focus for LMS propaganda. To some degree it was the passage of time, and the attainment of a venerable age and status for the LMS that converted items that had been once been used to document 'heathen' life into objects of historic and heritage value. In another sense, however, this earlier function of the LMS museum had been supplanted by the rise of museums of anthropology and ethnology. By the early twentieth century, instead of focussing primarily on the exotic otherness of the people among whom they worked, the rhetorical strategies of LMS propagandists increasingly drew on associations with particular missionaries and their 'celebrity', or perhaps 'saintly' qualities.

In 1903 the Mission House moved out of Blomfield Street, where it had been since 1835, for temporary accommodation at Gray's Inn Road. Meanwhile, a new headquarters was planned and built at New Bridge Street, officially opening in February 1905. In relation to this move, the Home Secretary wrote to overseas missionaries, asking them to interest their converts in the new premises of the

Society, and to send 'articles for sale' to raise money for the new building.²²⁶ The ground floor of the new building was designed to be leased to a bank or insurance office, while the offices of the society, accessible from a separate entrance, occupied the floor above. The third floor included committee and board rooms, while the fourth floor held the Society's library. The museum was once again located on the top floor, but passenger and a goods lifts connected all these floors to a basement warehouse of over 3000 square feet.²²⁷ While the architecture of the basement, which had a side entrance with a hydraulic rolling bay, emphasized the movement of things in and out of the building, the museum on the top floor seems to have been designed to preserve things in a more or less static position. In May 1905, Wardlaw Thompson announced that he had been assisted by Mr Kybert in re-arranging the museum in the new building, and suggested that 'a catalogue would shortly be prepared of the principal objects'.²²⁸ He also requested that the board grant him £25 for the costs that had been incurred.

The establishment of LMS Mission House in this new building coincided, however, with a period when objects from the LMS collection circulated beyond London more than ever before, through the exhibitions that were organized in towns across Britain between 1905 and 1908. The removal of a number of objects from the museum for display at these exhibitions had been sanctioned in January 1905, which presumably mean that these were not there when Kybert and Wardlaw Thompson attempted to re-arrange the museum.²²⁹ It is very difficult to identify the particular items from the museum which featured in these exhibitions, since so many others

²²⁶ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53

²²⁷ *ibid.*

²²⁸ This does not seem to have been published, but a notebook at the BM has 'Museum - W. Kybert' written on it.

²²⁹ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 54. 18

were lent by friends and supporters of the LMS. Nevertheless, when the large space of the Royal Agricultural Hall was filled by the *Orient in London*, a number of items that had previously been dispersed among a number of different geographically focussed courts were brought together in a section that focused on missionary heroes. Photographs of this section show a mixture of missionary portraits from the Mission House, navigational instruments, but also items from the Pacific associated with John Williams (see Plate 50). Prominently displayed is a section of the tree under which David Livingstone's heart was buried, borrowed from the Royal Geographical Society. The interest in famous martyr missionaries such as Livingstone, Williams and Chalmers, had developed into such a focus that by 1908 these items could be unselfconsciously referred to at an LMS exhibition as 'Relics'.

In late November 1909, the museum and library sub-committee recommended that the museum be discontinued and its contents sold 'for the benefit of the Society, preserving, however, all articles of historic Missionary interest, and such as would be useful for the loan department'.²³⁰ There seem to be a number of reasons underlying this apparent change of heart since 1905. The same committee had been appointed to consider not only 'the advisability of keeping the Museum in its present state' but also 'the need for securing more space for the library' so it seems likely that at least part of the motive for closing the museum was to secure the space it occupied.²³¹ However, the decision was also justified in a report to the Literature Committee in February 1910 because of:

- (a) The difficulty of keeping the objects in the Museum clean and in proper order
- (b) The rarity of any visitors

²³⁰ CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minutes/Box 1 1866-1915. p.111-112, 29 November 1909. 'Museum & Library Sub-Committee'

²³¹ *ibid.*

(c) The fact that there are now so many Exhibitions throughout the country of greater variety and worth.²³²

This suggests that the considerable success of the exhibitions staged between 1905 and 1908 had been a key factor in shifting the focus of LMS promotional activity away from static displays at Mission House, where they were rarely visited, towards mobile forms of exhibition where they could engage directly with the society's supporters. While the museum had obviously been an important site for the storage and display of a significant part of the LMS collection since 1814, by 1909, when compared with the *Orient in London*, it must have seemed a relatively insignificant way of displaying objects from the LMS collection. It is therefore significant that while the Museum & Literature sub-committee suggested the sale of the contents of the museum, they included the proviso that 'all articles of historic Missionary interest, and such as would be useful for the loan department' be preserved.²³³ Mrs Whyte, who served on the sub-committee, proposed that Directors of the LMS be given the opportunity to purchase items from the collection, and this was agreed by the Literature Committee.²³⁴ The question of the Museum was then referred back to the sub-committee to establish the 'full value of the various articles'.²³⁵ In March 1910, the Home Board of the LMS agreed to the Literature Committee's proposal to close the museum. This had been justified in six ways:

²³² CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minutes/Box 1 1866-1915. p.113, 14 February 1910. 'Report of Museum & Library Sub-Committee'

²³³ CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minutes/Box 1 1866-1915. p.111-112, 29 November 1909. 'Museum & Library Sub-Committee'

²³⁴ CWM/LMS/Home/Literature Committee Minutes/Box 1 1866-1915. p.113, 14 February 1910. 'Report of Museum & Library Sub-Committee'

²³⁵ *ibid.*

- The museum was formed at a time when objects of interest from India and China and from remote and out of the way parts of the world were rare, and when trophies of mission work in the form of idols and objects and instruments of heathen worship were interesting and inspiring novelties...
- Museums have been multiplied in all parts of the country, many of which have far larger and finer collections...
- The Society has also a considerable collection of articles of missionary interest in the Loan Department, which are exhibited from time to time in meeting and exhibitions in various parts of the kingdom...
- ..by an arrangement with the British museum a large number of the most valuable articles have been handed over to its care on permanent loan, and are exhibited in a specially prepared case with a label on it stating that the articles are the property of the Society.
- It is very rarely visited, the only reason for maintaining it now seems to be sentiment to the past...
- ...it is not possible to keep it clean and attractive without an expenditure of time and money, which does not seem to be justified...²³⁶

Transferring Custody

Rather than understanding the closure of the LMS museum and the dispersal of its collections as a single and decisive event, it makes sense to consider it as connected to wider processes through which items were transmitted between actors who were connected by an existing network of exchange. The LMS and its individual missionaries played an important role in collecting and transporting objects to the metropolitan centre of empire. In the process, the rarity of these objects increased and their value was enhanced. By the time the LMS museum was closed, sales of items to collectors, both individual and corporate, seems to have been an established

²³⁶ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9 (1901- 1917) Box 53. 15 March 1910, 36. 'Museum - Question of Continuance'

part of LMS practice. In 1894, Wardlaw Thompson sold 141 objects from Papua to the BM for £26.10.²³⁷ While the relationship of the LMS with the BM had presumably been strengthened by the loan arrangement brokered with Read and Franks in 1890, the objects appear to have been deliberately brought to London by James Chalmers to be sold.²³⁸ A number of itemized lists, written by Chalmers, described the different objects, giving an explanation of their purpose together with a local language term. On a list of 'Things from mouth of Fly River' appears:

72. *Kāro. Fish trap. Baited inside. Made from Loire palm.*²³⁹

There seem to have been a number of examples of these, and by reassembling a range of documents and labels, it has been possible to track their movements since they arrived in London (see Plate 51). Three found their way into the LMS museum, while a number of others were sold to the BM, with four listed in the 1894 accessions register. A number of others also seem to have been retained by the BM as duplicates. One of these seems to have been acquired, presumably through exchange, by James Edge Partington, a private collector who did unpaid volunteer work at the BM (Dalton, 1931). He also illustrated one of the examples at the BM, and this appeared in the second series of his *Ethnographical Album of the Pacific Islands* (see Plate 51), (Partington, 1895: 194). In 1910, Henry Balfour purchased two fish traps for the PRM when the LMS museum closed, and a third was acquired

²³⁷ This purchase was paid for by the Christy Fund. BM: Centre for Anthropology Library, Christy Register, 8 March 1894

²³⁸ CUL: Haddon Papers, Papers from the Museum of Arch and Anth, 3. Chalmers to Haddon, 18 August 1894. Sent from Detford. 'I believe they have sold all the curios'

²³⁹ BM: Centre for Anthropology Archives, 465. List of objects from Polynesia, Mouth of Fly River, Domori. A copy of this list also exists in AOA Archives Box 53, Envelope 7, 28. Notes 'Things from mouth of Fly River 1-85'

by A.W.F. Fuller, who visited the LMS Museum at the same time as Balfour.²⁴⁰ In 1925, Edge Partington donated his fish-trap to the PRM, where it was reunited with and displayed alongside the two already there.²⁴¹ In 1958, Fuller sold his collection, including the fish trap to the Field Museum in Chicago (Force and Force, 1971). In 1972, a string of five fish-traps were discovered, tied together at the BM. A cardboard label on which the number 72 had originally been written had broken, and with this the attached red lined sticker on which 'Dups' was written had been lost. A new label was attached to the fish traps on which was written 'SE ASIA, BORNEO? NEW GUINEA?' In 1980, however, the fish-traps were mistakenly identified as being the four that had been accessioned in 1894, and the fifth was allocated a new number, 'Q80 OC886'.²⁴² It should be clear from this example that since their arrival in Britain in 1894, the thirteen fish-traps that Chalmers brought from the mouth of the Fly River have circulated within a fairly narrow sphere of exchange, largely moving between the collections of a group of well connected collectors, and ultimately into the collections of the small number of public museums with significant ethnographic collections.

While many transfers of material into public museum collections were organized by individual missionaries returning to London on furlough, the involvement of Wardlaw Thompson in the sale of the New Guinea material in 1894 suggests that at least in some cases, high level officers of the LMS in London could be responsible for brokering these exchanges. In 1909, the LMS were also involved in arranging a donation to the BM of a 26ft long Samoan canoe and accompanying

²⁴⁰ PRM: Accessions Register, 1910.62.73 & 1910.62.74

FM: Card Catalogue: 276362.

²⁴¹ PRM: Accessions Register, 1925.26.2

²⁴² BM: Oc1980,Q.886

fishing rod.²⁴³ Nevertheless, when Wardlaw Thompson approached C.H. Read about the dispersal of the LMS museum collection on 15 April 1910, he anticipated that Read would be 'surprised that we propose to give that museum up altogether and to dispose of a large part of the contents'.²⁴⁴ Read was offered the chance to purchase 'things here which you may find of value' before they were offered to others. Wardlaw Thompson's offer 'to go up with you myself' suggests that the items were still in the museum on the top floor of the building at this stage. Read visited on 22 April and on the same day Wardlaw Thompson wrote to Rev. E.W. Johnson in Cambridge about the collection from Cheshunt College, which had been stored at New Bridge Street since the college's move to Cambridge in 1905.²⁴⁵ He stated that the LMS museum had been cleared, that the warehouse was overflowing, and requested permission to sell the Cheshunt College collection. On 5 May Read wrote to John Lubbock, who oversaw the Christy fund, asking for £175 to pay for objects that had been selected and were already at the BM.²⁴⁶ The BM accessions registers suggest that 262 objects were included in this purchase.²⁴⁷ Read volunteered the services of Joyce, and on 3 May, Neville Jones wrote to A.T. Joyce sending a 'little Cheshunt College

²⁴³ BM: Accession Register, Oc1909,0208.1.a

²⁴⁴ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, T-Z box

²⁴⁵ WCA: Cheshunt College Minute Books: C1/19/139. Dated 21/09/1905.

When a request came that September from Congregationalists in Halifax to borrow missionary curios for an exhibition, the request was referred to the LMS 'as the property of the College for such purposes had been lent to the Society'.

²⁴⁶ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, Out letters 1910. Read to Lord Avebury, 5 May 1910

²⁴⁷ BM: Accession Register, 24 October 1910, 253 – 515.

The BM database now lists 283 objects purchased in 1910, but others have been found unlabelled in the museum subsequently which may also have been transferred at this time. Of these 103 are recorded as from mainland Africa, 73 from the Pacific Islands, 32 from India, 27 from Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait, 25 from China, 15 from the Americas, 5 from SE Asia and 5 from Madagascar

basket' purchased for 2 shillings, as well as a Maori mat 'which I thought you ought to have too'.²⁴⁸

Although the initial selection by the BM depended on established relationships between Wardlaw Thompson and Read, Neville Jones' personal contacts seem to have played a much more important role in the subsequent process. On 13 May 1910 a further selection was made when Henry Balfour and A.W.F. Fuller visited together. According to Fuller, he and Balfour were 'big friends', but each also had connections to Neville Jones who had been at Dulwich College with Fuller, and seems to have known Balfour from Oxford.²⁴⁹ According to Fuller, he and Balfour were invited to choose objects from the collection and pay a shilling for each:

So there was Balfour. I think we had a toss, and one of us got the first toss you see. And we started and the next man had the next choice, you see and so we went on, choice and choice. And we each made a great pile....my pile and Balfour's pile. And I looked out a thing and said I like this. Alright, take that and Balfour has the next choice and he would choose something else. And so we went on.²⁵⁰

An entry in the accession register of the PRM, under the title 'London Missionary Society', records 97 objects that were 'Purchased from the Society when their museum was broken up and dispersed' for £10-14.²⁵¹ It also suggests that the prices were a little more variable than the one shilling per item remembered by Fuller nearly fifty years later, though many of the prices do seem to have been fairly nominal values. The PRM later received twenty objects as part of the estate of Henry Balfour,

²⁴⁸ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, K-L box & H-J box

²⁴⁹ FM: Sonaband 13 (Feb. 27, 1958) counter number 38

Fuller's records suggest both 13 and 31 May as the date at which this happened, but 13 fits better with the general chronology. It may be that he purchased additional items from Stevens on 31 May.

²⁵⁰ FM: Sonaband 13 (Feb. 27, 1958) counter number 38

²⁵¹ PRM: Accession Register 1910.62.1 - 97.

This collection includes objects from New Guinea (28), Africa (36 with 24 from southern Africa, 5 from Central Africa and 7 unlocated), India (21), Madagascar (11), China (4), Sri Lanka (2), Cook Islands (1), as well as six unlocated arrows. A total of £10-14-0 was paid for this selection.

who seems to have bought these from the LMS in 1910.²⁵² It has been possible to identify 163 objects acquired by Fuller from the LMS, as well as 32 from the Cheshunt College collection, though not all of these were purchased in 1910.²⁵³

As well as Fuller and Balfour, selections from the collection were made by Dr Harrison from the Horniman Museum, where records suggest twenty objects were received from the LMS in 1910.²⁵⁴ In addition, the purchase records of the dealer W.O. Oldman show that he bought 70 objects from the LMS, and 18 from the Cheshunt collection on the 18 May 1910.²⁵⁵ The remainder was due to be sold at auction, but Jones didn't think that 'there are half a dozen things in the catalogue that are worth having from a decorative point of view. Everything of interest or beauty went quickly'.²⁵⁶ Indeed, it seems that before Balfour and Fuller had made their selections, material had been sold to supporters of the LMS, and Jones had been anxious for items to be given prices during the week in May when LMS meetings took place in London.²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Oldman's accounts suggest that he purchased an additional 118 objects from the LMS collection at this sale at Stevens on 31 May.²⁵⁸ If figures for the objects that can be accounted for from the 1910 dispersal are compared to the figures from the 1860 catalogue, excluding the Natural History material (See plate 52, facing p.196), it becomes clear that a certain amount of

²⁵² PRM Accession Register: 1910.77.1 & 2, 1938.34.38, 58, 59, 60, 545, 550, 573, 626, 627, 640, 1938.35.16, 1557-63

²⁵³ On 8 June, Jones sent a cheque to Cheshunt College in Cambridge with their proceeds from the sale of their 'missionary curios'. It seems that the amount sent was under £10. WCA: Cheshunt College Letter Books, C3 – 19, 444. Johnson to Jones, 10 June 1910.

²⁵⁴ HM: Accession Register: 10.62 – 10.81. This includes material from Asia (7), Oceania (6), Africa (5), and Europe (2).

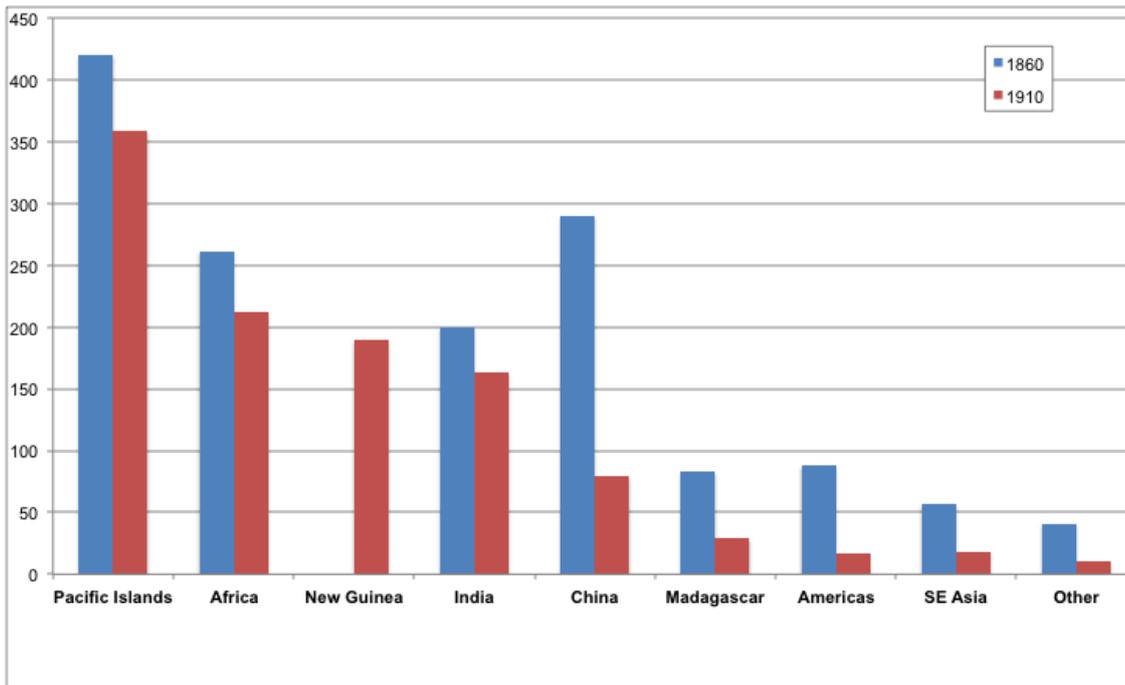
²⁵⁵ BM: Centre for Anthropology - Oldman Collection Purchase Books 1910

²⁵⁶ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, H-J box. As well as mentioning Balfour, Fuller and Harrison, he refers to someone called Prof. Marcel Andréé.

²⁵⁷ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence: 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 9 May 1910.

²⁵⁸ BM: Centre for Anthropology - Oldman Collection Purchase Books 1910

Plate 52



Timeline of Dispersal

- 15 March 1910** Home Board agreed to closure of the LMS Museum
A large selection was made for the Loan department.
- 22 April 1910** Charles Hercules Read visited the museum, probably with Joyce, and selected at least 262 objects for the British Museum
- By 3 May 1910** Joyce had suggested prices which had been attached to the remainder of the collection
Directors were invited to visit the collection to purchase items and many things sold during missionary week 1910
- 13 May 1910** Henry Balfour and A.W.F. Fuller visited the museum, purchasing c.120 objects each
Dr Harrison from the Horniman Museum visited and selected around 20 objects
- 18 May 1910** W. Oldman purchased 70 objects
- 31 May, 1910** Auction at Stevens when Oldman purchased another 118 objects, and Fuller may also have bought more things

Graph comparing figures from the 1860 catalogue to the numbers of objects that are accounted for in the 1910 dispersal, largely to museums, and below, timeline of known transactions involved in the dispersal of the collection

material remains unaccounted for, especially since the collections must have grown to a certain extent during the intervening fifty years. Some sense of change in the distribution of the collections is suggested by the material from New Guinea, which was not listed in the 1860 catalogue as the LMS only began work in the Torres Strait in 1871. Some of the unaccounted for material must have been transferred to the loan collection in 1895 or 1905, or else part of the 'large selection' made 'for the Loan department' in 1910.²⁵⁹ A number of other things were also retained by Jones to form part of the planned display of relics. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that only a very small amount of the material from China that was listed in the 1860 catalogue can be accounted for amongst either the transfers to other museums, or the auction sale at Stevens. Given Jones' comment to Joyce that 'Everything of interest or beauty went quickly', his eagerness to have the items in the museum priced before missionary week, as well as Mrs Whyte's suggestion that material be made available for purchase by LMS Directors, it seems sensible to conclude that a large number of items from China were purchased by Directors and supporters of the society.²⁶⁰ They were presumably rather less interested in the material from the Pacific, Africa, New Guinea and India, which was still primarily of interest to a fairly small group of dedicated collectors of ethnographic material in 1910.

Although the closure of the LMS museum may not have been primarily financially motivated, the income it generated was extremely welcome, especially since the LMS had accumulated a deficit of £40,000 by 1909 (Goodall, 1954: 549). In a letter to Joyce on 27 May 1910, Neville Jones stated that 'Altogether we have made quite a substantial sum on the sale of the museum, and we shall thus have the

²⁵⁹ CWM/LMS. Home. Board Minutes. FBN 9. Box 56. 51

²⁶⁰ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence: 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 27 May 1910

means to effect many little improvements and alterations about the house which we have long wanted, but have been unable to afford.²⁶¹ This may also have been a relevant factor when Joyce raised the possibility of purchasing the collection that was already on loan to the BM the following month.²⁶² This was formally proposed to the LMS board in September, with an offer price of £1000, though Read suggested to the trustees of the BM that the true value of the collection should be placed at between £6000 and £7000.²⁶³ The offer was accepted along with the suggestion that 'it would be greatly to the advantage of the collection at large if the objects in the LMS case could be placed in their proper positions among the exhibits from the different countries represented', and this led the Directors of the LMS to express concern about 'whether the Society would still be identified with the objects in question'.²⁶⁴ Reassurance was given by Read that 'every object will show by its label that it is part of the L.M.S. Collection, the name by which it is known in all the scientific circles of the world.'²⁶⁵ By 13 May 1911, when the sale was reported to the BM Trustees' Standing Committee, the LMS had insisted on three conditions. Although the transaction was referred to as a sale rather than a loan, these conditions are nevertheless suggestive of Weiner's notion of 'keeping-while-giving':

1. That every object should continue to have on its label the name of the Society and the fact that it had come from the Society's collection
2. That the Society should have the privilege of photographing for their own purposes and use any of the objects in the collection

²⁶¹ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence: 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 27 May 1910

²⁶² BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce 8 June 1910

²⁶³ BM: Original Papers 1911, no. 503. 31: Report respecting offers for Purchase, March 1911

²⁶⁴ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, H-J box Jones to Joyce, 29 September 1910

²⁶⁵ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, H-J box Jones to Joyce, 29 September 1910

3. That the articles in the collection should not at any time be disposed of to foreign museums or dispersed among foreign purchasers²⁶⁶

Both parties seem to have recognized this as more than a straightforward purchase, despite the exchange of money for goods. It is significant that Fuller also remembered his purchases from the LMS collection as ‘virtually a gift from the London Missionary’, and suggested this may have been related to his personal relationships with both Neville Jones and Wardlaw Thompson.²⁶⁷ While the LMS largely framed the dispersal of its museum collection in terms of sale, it hardly seems to have been a straightforward commercially oriented set of transactions. Instead, care was taken to ensure that the majority of the collection was transferred either to the loan collection, to supporters of the LMS, or to a number of well known collectors, many of whom already had exchange relationships with the LMS, as well as with each another.

Things Come Together then Fall Apart

Despite the sale of at least 1000 objects from the LMS museum collection in 1910, things continued to be displayed at Mission House in London. No imagery survives showing the case of relics arranged by Jones. Nevertheless, a photograph taken at the retirement of Wardlaw Thompson as Foreign Secretary in June 1914 makes it very clear that the arrangement of the LMS committee room enabled connections to be established between living humans involved in the society, their institutional ancestors, manifested through portraits, and a range of things from overseas (see Plate 53). While Wardlaw Thompson is surrounded by the staff he

²⁶⁶ BM: Minutes of Trustees Standing Committee 13 May 1911 (page ref. C2831)

²⁶⁷ FM: Sonaband 13 (Feb. 27, 1958) counter number 38

directed, a portrait of David Livingstone is positioned behind them at the centre of a fan of weapons, 'brought from Polynesia' by LMS missionaries. Presumably these were linked in the minds of many who saw them to the historic role of the LMS in the pacification and conversion of this part of the world.

The closure of the LMS museum and the sale of most of the collection seems to have done little to stem the ongoing arrival of things from the mission fields in London. On 9 May 1910, in the midst of dispersing the museum collection, Neville Jones wrote to T.A. Joyce about 'some New Guinea things that have recently been brought home by one of our missionaries'.²⁶⁸ According to Jones, he had been given instructions by the missionary concerned to sell them 'for the benefit of his motor boat'. On 4 June, Jones wrote again to Joyce sending him 'the New Guinea things' he had selected, but also noting that the dealer Oldman would buy them if the BM did not.²⁶⁹ Interestingly, this letter suggests that Oldman had already bought 'the biscuit tin breastplate', which Joyce must have rejected, presumably on the grounds of inauthenticity.²⁷⁰ The BM database shows that five 'New Guinea things' were recorded as purchased from A.N. Johnson, Home Secretary of the LMS in 1910.²⁷¹ Oldman's purchase register also shows that he bought a 'New Guinea Breast Ornament made of tin' for 12 shillings on the 9th June that year.²⁷² Jones also asked advice from Joyce on what to charge Oldman, which suggests that while there may have been an increasing commercial interest in the things that the LMS had to sell,

²⁶⁸ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 9 May 1910

²⁶⁹ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 4 June 1910

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*

²⁷¹ BM: Oc1910-1028.1-5

²⁷² BM: Centre for Anthropology - Oldman Collection Purchase Books 1910.

The PRM also purchased 36 New Guinea objects on Feb 3 1910 for £10 from the Curator of the Plymouth City Art Gallery and Museum from a collection made by H.M. Dauncey collection, also an LMS missionary.

its officers had little awareness of their potential value.²⁷³ That said, the LMS played an important role in supplying collectors of ethnographic goods throughout the twentieth century, whether these were commercial operators such as Oldman, private collectors such as Fuller, or corporate collectors such as the BM.

The PRM acquired three separate collections made by missionaries and sent to London in 1911, which seem to have been brought to the attention of Balfour by Jones.²⁷⁴ Even after the departure of Neville Jones to southern Africa, however, the LMS continued to function as a source of ethnographic objects for public museums. The BM received additional material from the LMS in 1912, 1913, 1921, 1935, and 1939.²⁷⁵ While some of this material may have arrived in Britain recently, labels attached to objects acquired in the 1930s suggest they were exhibited at LMS exhibitions during the first decade of the twentieth century.²⁷⁶ Other things still carried labels that related to the Museum catalogue of c.1860,²⁷⁷ though these items may have become part of a private collection, before being returned to the LMS in the 1930s.²⁷⁸ In January 1930, W.L. Hildburgh arranged to pay the LMS £30, the scrap

²⁷³ BM: Department of Prehistory and Europe archive correspondence 1910, H-J box. Jones to Joyce, 4 June 1910

²⁷⁴ PRM: Accessions register 1911.56.1-10 (Specimens collected by a missionary in the Massim district), 1911.61.1-8 (Specimens collected in China), 1911.61.9-31 (Specimens collected by Rev. E. Baxter Riley of Daru, Torres Strait, in New Guinea). Interestingly, Balfour seems to have bought a Chinese vase from the LMS for himself at a price of 10/6 at the same time as he acquired the Chinese collection.

²⁷⁵ BM: Database listings - Oc1912,1104.1, Af1913,0614.1 & 2, Oc1921,1005.1 – 17, Oc1935,0411.1 – 35, & Oc1939,11.1 – 7. Correspondence in the CWM archive at SOAS, suggests that the selection of items sent in 1939 may have been sent for valuation, but were processed by the BM as a gift: CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 21, Folder 2

²⁷⁶ Oc1935,0411.29 & 30 have labels showing they were lent to the Manchester Missionary Exhibition, 6 – 16 February 1907, by W. Crossfield Esq. 1939,11.3 has a label showing it was lent to the Bristol Missionary Exhibition by Miss Mann. Oc1939,11.4 & 5 have labels showing they were lent to the Rochdale Missionary Exhibition by Miss Mann.

²⁷⁷ Oc1939,11.4 has a green label with the number 50 on it. This related it to the following description from the section on 'Idols and Objects of Superstition' from the Pacific in the 1860 catalogue: ROMATANE, from Maute, adorned with a long tail of cock's feathers, and tufts of human hair. Oc1939,11.2 has a green label with the number 58: A SAMOAN GOD, a short round stick; and numerous small variously shaped idols, some decorated with feathers.

²⁷⁸ CWM/LMS. Home. Miscellaneous (Odds). Box 21, Folder 2

metal value of an old Japanese bell stored in the payment, so that this could be transferred to the V&A.²⁷⁹ The Horniman Museum also received further material from the LMS in 1935, 1960, 1962, and from its successor organization the Congregational Council for World Mission (CCWM) in 1969 & 1971.²⁸⁰ Some of this material had been acquired by the LMS from overseas relatively recently, other objects acquired by the Horniman Museum as late as 1960 had labels suggesting they had been displayed in exhibitions such as the *Orient in London* in 1908.²⁸¹ While some objects left the LMS collection to become part of individuals' collections before being returned to the LMS and transferred to public collections, it seems that others may have circulated in the LMS loans collection for much of the twentieth century.

A number of objects from the LMS have found their way into public museum collections via private collectors, who seem to have been fairly frequent visitors at the mission house during the first half of the twentieth century. Fuller acquired material from the LMS on at least three occasions between 1912 and 1936.²⁸² According to the records of Harry Beasley, a contemporary of Fuller's who established the private

²⁷⁹ *ibid.* & V&A: Accession number: M.57-1939. V&A: Archives File: Hildburgh, Dr. W.L. 1929 1930 Part 8

²⁸⁰ HM: Accession Register - 35.8 – 12, 16.1.60/1, 3.2.60/13 – 23, 7.3.60/5 – 11, 5.3.62/10 – 45, 1969.284 – 304, 1971.667 – 799.

The LMS joined with the Commonwealth Missionary Society in 1966 to form the CCWM. Following the merger of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church of England and Wales in 1972, the CCWM became the Council for World Mission (Congregationalist and Reformed) in 1973. In 1977 this became the CWM, which attempted to create an internationalist organisation in which many different international community of churches would cooperate. See: <http://www.mundus.ac.uk/cats/4/249.htm>

²⁸¹ HM: 7.3.60/11 has a label suggesting it was loaned to the *Orient in London* exhibition, 1908, by Osmond.

²⁸² The following dates are recorded on the labels in Fuller's collection, now in the Field Museum in Chicago: 13 May 1910 (1), 31 May 1910 (3), 31 August 1912 (1), 4 December 1928 (26) & 4 December 1936 (2). He also acquired material from Wardlaw Thompson, who may have brokered the sales of things brought back by particular missionaries on 9 August 1912 (20), 19 November 1912 (1), 25 June 1913 (4). However, given the dates, these things may have been dispersed by Wardlaw Thompson in preparation for his retirement, since Fuller records that he collected a number of these things in New Guinea around twenty years earlier. Fuller also acquired a canoe Prow from Milne bay, New Guinea that had belonged to Wardlaw Thompson on 2 September 1932, following his death.

Cranmore Ethnological Museum (Waterfield and King, 2006), he purchased material from the LMS headquarters on at least eighteen occasions between 1910 and 1938 (see Plate 14, facing p.82)²⁸³. In addition, Beasley purchased material directly from individual LMS missionaries on at least eight occasions between 1913 and 1935²⁸⁴. The relationship between these two collectors, each of whom maintained collections equivalent to those of many public museums, seems to have involved considerable competition. With the retirement of Wardlaw Thompson and the departure of Neville Jones to southern Africa, Fuller seems to have lost some of the privileged access to the LMS collection he had enjoyed in 1910. According to an account given some years later, he had been promised objects that were ‘in the council chamber of the society, 30 or 40 feet up on the wall arranged as a great star’, but because of their inaccessibility, he waited 6 years for them to be taken down.²⁸⁵ According to Fuller’s recollection:

Neville Jones happened to be back in England...He came down here one day... and said ‘You know boy, you’d better hurry up with those, those clubs, I saw Beasley very longingly, lovingly fingering them....Well I don’t trust any collector, [Laughs] Beasley especially and I said I’ll go and see about it at once so I rang up Chamberlain and made an appointment straight away.’²⁸⁶

The date when Fuller acquired a large number of clubs was in 1928, suggesting these may have been taken down as part of a move to new headquarters at Livingstone House.²⁸⁷ This also suggests that the star of weapons referred to by Fuller was not that pictured in 1914 (see Plate 53, facing p.198), since the LMS moved to another location, 48 Broadway, between 1920 and 1928. While the

²⁸³ Many thanks to Lucie Carreau who was able to provide me with this information following her doctoral research on Beasley’s collection. These purchases took place in 1910, 1911, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1931, twice in 1933, seven times in 1935, twice in 1937, as well as in 1938.

²⁸⁴ Twice in 1913, in 1914, 1915, 1916, 1929, possibly twice in 1930, and twice in 1935

²⁸⁵ FM: Sonaband 113 (June 12, 1958) counter number 49

²⁸⁶ Field Museum Sonaband 113 (June 12, 1958) counter number 49

²⁸⁷ FM: Object labels

weapons never found their way onto the committee room wall at Livingstone House, a guidebook written in 1928 suggests that a case of relics continued to be displayed in the new library.²⁸⁸ At this time these included:

- Chalmers personal relics
- parts of the Livingstone tree
- Malagasy Buried Bible
- the club which killed John Williams
- the biscuit from the DUFF²⁸⁹

Missionary ancestors, in the form of painted portraits, continued to be present in the committee room, with the portrait of David Livingstone retaining its central position behind the Chair's seat, flanked by John Williams and Robert Moffat (see Plate 53, facing p.198).²⁹⁰ Another guidebook to Livingstone House, typed in 1947 also lists these paintings, but suggests that the club that killed John Williams and other relics of his life could be seen in the reference library.²⁹¹ It also refers to a book rest in the library, made from the branch of a tree overhanging Henry Nott's grave, as well as two more made from the wood of a chapel built by John Smith, 'the martyr of Demerara'.²⁹² The ship's biscuit from the Duff, however, seems to have been destroyed by the bomb which struck Livingstone House on 10th May 1941.²⁹³ A photograph in the CWM archives from the 1950s or early 1960s appears to show a (presumably) Polynesian woman standing in front of a portrait of John Williams, holding the club with which he was reputedly killed (Plate 54, facing p.204).²⁹⁴ While

²⁸⁸ CWM/LMS/Home/General Photographs Box 1/10 – Guide to the Mission House, 1928, p.3

²⁸⁹ CWM/LMS/Home/General Photographs Box 1/10 – Guide to the Mission House, 1928, p.3

²⁹⁰ CWM/LMS/Home/General Photographs Box 1/10 – Photograph 7/2

²⁹¹ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 2. Livingstone House Handbook, p. 32

²⁹² CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 2. Livingstone House Handbook, p.42 & 35

²⁹³ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Fletcher Notebook p.26

²⁹⁴ CWM/LMS/Home/General Photographs Box 4. Photographs 20/22, 20/23 & 20/25. Two of the images in this series 20/24 & 20/26 show the same woman shaking hands with Maxwell Janes, who was general secretary between 1950 & 1966 (Thorogood, 1994: 323), suggesting these images date to this period.

this suggests a fairly important role for an item of Pacific material culture in the formal enactment of the relationship between the LMS and a Christian from the Pacific, the fact that this photograph was posed in front of the Williams portrait is also revealing. It is suggestive of the degree to which the history and heritage of the missionary society was increasingly mediated, not so much by relics of missionary ancestors, but by paintings of them, which continued to have a prominent presence in the headquarters of the society into the second half of the twentieth century, as well as a wider circulation through postcards that were available for sale.

Although much of the century following 1890 involved the dispersal of property by the LMS, there seems to have been a period during the middle of the twentieth century when the LMS acquired a large number of things relating to its history. The majority of these were given by descendants of missionaries, or others who had been involved with the history of the society. On inheriting goods from their ancestors, many seem to have felt that the most sensible thing to do was to return them to the LMS. Handwritten records exist of donations of this kind from 1946 onwards.²⁹⁵ In March 1949, a collection of Asian and Pacific curios, collected by William Kershaw, able seaman on the ship *John Williams I* between 1851 and 1855, was donated to the LMS by his grandson, along with a reference written for him by Captain William Morgan.²⁹⁶ In December 1946, three Chinese vases associated with Robert Morrison were presented to the LMS, and in January 1947 these were joined by a set of scientific and navigational instruments used by Robert Moffat.²⁹⁷ African 'curios' from Jane Moffat's collection were given at the same time, some of which were transferred

²⁹⁵ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Fletcher Notebook. These are recorded in reverse order from the last page of this notebook.

²⁹⁶ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Fletcher Notebook p. 166
CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 2. "Kershaw's" South Seas Collection of Implements

²⁹⁷ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Fletcher Notebook p.183 - 4

to the Loans department while others with no LMS uses were given to staff.²⁹⁸ A number were recorded as 'special ones', and these included a wooden headrest, a battle-axe, wooden spoons, a snuff box and a ceremonial club.²⁹⁹ Also included in this donation was a framed leaf from the 'Livingstone tree' and a piece of bark in which Livingstone's body had been wrapped. Indeed, many of the donations associated with these years seem to have been regarded as relics of particularly well-known nineteenth century LMS missionaries.³⁰⁰ In 1955, the LMS was sent a section of the tree under which Livingstone's heart had been buried by the exhibition department of the CMS.³⁰¹ In other cases, collectors of ethnographic items may have used things associated with LMS missionaries as a means of establishing relationships of exchange with the society. In 1949, the collector J. Hooper donated an inkstand that had belonged to John Williams and a wooden hat used by him to collect money, which he had received from one of Williams' granddaughters. In December the same year, Kenneth Webster, the dealer returned the hat that James Chalmers had been wearing when killed, which had been lost for some years.³⁰²

In 1966, the London Missionary Society ceased to exist under that name and its functions were transferred to the CCWM, which became the Council for World Mission (Congregational and Reformed) in 1973, and the Council for World Mission (CWM) in 1977.³⁰³ These name changes signalled a wholesale transformation of the way in which missionary work was understood and organized. It is perhaps not surprising that given these 'gales of change' (Thorogood, 1994), there seems to have

²⁹⁸ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Fletcher Notebook p.181

²⁹⁹ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Fletcher Notebook p.180

³⁰⁰ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Fletcher Notebook p. 180

³⁰¹ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Fletcher Notebook p. 138

³⁰² CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Fletcher Notebook pp. 166-167, pp. 162-163

³⁰³ See: <http://www.mundus.ac.uk/cats/4/249.htm>

been a reorientation in the way in which the organization related to the material heritage of the LMS. In 1968, the CCWM arranged for a pair of highly decorated adzes given by a descendent of John Williams to be sent to the Cook Islands Museum.³⁰⁴ By 1975, however, the majority of remaining LMS 'relics' were kept in a 'cage' in the basement of Livingstone House, where even the majority of paintings were stored in wooden chests.³⁰⁵ A small exhibition seems to have remained in the entrance hall, detailing the life and times of David Livingstone, while a bell from the John Williams ship was mounted on the wall and used to mark prayer times.³⁰⁶ The cross in the prayer room was also said to be made from the wood of the tree under which Livingstone's heart was buried, connecting the new organization to the history of the LMS in subtle but rather submerged ways.³⁰⁷ In 1990, a number of items were lost in a theft, including the Chinese vases associated with Robert Morrison and a pistol associated with James Chalmers.³⁰⁸ The club that killed John Williams was also noted to be missing at this time.³⁰⁹ Following this, the CWM gave a number of items associated with the history of the African missions to the Kuruman Moffat Mission in South Africa, by then established as a museum.³¹⁰ A painting and some remains of the ashes of Madagascan Christian martyrs were also sent to

³⁰⁴ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 2. Document entitled 'Presentation of Manganian Axes'

³⁰⁵ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Document entitled 'Outline Account of the Missionary Museum' by J.T. Hardyman, dated 26 September 1975. p.4

³⁰⁶ *ibid.* Livingstone Exhibition: CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Document entitled 'Items in the CWM museum collection in 1975' by J.T. Hardyman, p.31

Information on prayer times anecdotal information from attending meeting with retired missionaries.

³⁰⁷ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Document entitled 'Items in the CWM museum collection in 1975' by J.T. Hardyman, p.35

³⁰⁸ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Document entitled 'Museum' by J.T. Hardyman, dated January 1990

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*

³¹⁰ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Document entitled 'Museum Material' by J.T. Hardyman, dated 25 May 1990. As well as a number of historic images, this included a stool and a brass plate associated with Moffat, a printing block from the Kuruman press, as well as a uniform from the Tiger Kloof educational establishment.

Madagascar that year.³¹¹ Since then, little else has happened to the artefacts in the CWM basement.

Conclusion

A listing of objects in the basement of Livingstone House, compiled after the thefts of 1990, suggested that:

Some of the material is of LMS interest. But there are many items which are rather of 'anthropological' interest.
What the LMS called curios.³¹²

This three sentence statement, made a hundred years after the first loan of material from the LMS to the BM, encapsulates the ongoing process by which these categories of material were differentiated over the course of the twentieth century. While 'curio' was a category that dated back to the early nineteenth century, and could encapsulate material which was of interest for a range of different reasons, the sorting of things according to missionary/LMS interest and anthropological interest was by no means a straightforward process. Indeed, many things in the LMS collection had been of missionary interest in the mid-nineteenth century precisely for the reasons they became of anthropological interest later – that they were evidence of non-Christian ways of life.

The exchange of objects, and the redistribution of the LMS collection that this processes involved is revealing of the way in which anthropology came to be recognized as a secular authority on people, places and things that had once been predominantly of missionary interest. At the same time, the LMS increasingly came to define itself, not simply through its engagement with people in far off places, but

³¹¹ CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Document entitled 'Items given away 1990'

³¹² CWM/LMS/ Museum Box 1. Document entitled 'Museum' by J.T. Hardyman, dated January 1990

through its history and the celebrity of its most famous nineteenth century missionaries. Objects of missionary interest came to mean objects that were connected to missionaries, some of whom had achieved a position of regard equivalent to that of religious martyrs, while the objects that were associated with them came to be referred to and regarded as relics. While the LMS museum increasingly moved away from an explicit concern with religious idols in the late-nineteenth century, and openly questioned the applicability of this category in the early twentieth century, it nevertheless seems to have increasingly engaged in the conservation of religious relics, a practice that a generation earlier would have been associated with the idolatrous excesses of Roman Catholicism.

In 1997, the CWM moved their headquarters from Livingstone House to Ipalo House, a nearby modern office block. This effectively ended an association with the history and heritage of the LMS that had continued for three decades after the organisation had ceased to be known by that name. While the new headquarters no longer carried the name of David Livingstone, one of the few LMS missionaries who remained famous throughout the twentieth century, it remained close to his remains, interred in nearby Westminster Abbey. Although the current arrangement of the building suggests little material trace of the long history of the LMS, in a locked room in the basement, that is sometimes referred to as the 'museum room', there are a number of things that were once regarded as the inalienable property of the LMS. Stored alongside ceremonial gifts from recent CWM conventions are a number of Polynesian and African weapons from the early nineteenth century, boxed paintings of institutional ancestors, as well as a range of objects associated with once revered LMS missionaries (see Plate 54, facing p.204). There are a large number of pieces of

the tree under which David Livingstone's heart was buried, which must have been particularly popular relics during the twentieth century. Following a decision on 22 June 2011 to move the headquarters of CWM to Singapore, nearly two centuries after the LMS first established a headquarters in London in 1814, the ultimate fate of what remains of the LMS collection remains undecided, and the issue of dispersal arises once again.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Beyond Iconoclasm

How is it possible to go beyond this cycle of fascination, repulsion, destruction, and atonement, which is generated by the forbidden image worship?

*Bruno Latour, What is Iconoclasm?*³¹³

On Sunday 6th May, 1827, the LMS missionaries John Williams and Charles Pitman landed with their wives on the island of Rarotonga, in what is now the Cook Islands. They arrived just as the Rarotongans were leaving chapel, the women wearing bonnets and white cloth, the men in hats and clothes ‘of native manufacture’. Williams described what he saw as ‘the greatest concourse of people I had seen since we left England’ (Williams, 1837: 113). He had first visited the island less than four years previously, when the wives of the Raiatean teachers he intended on settling there had been threatened by local men. Despite this, Papeiha, a Polynesian teacher who had previously worked on the neighbouring island of Aitutaki, offered to remain at Rarotonga provided that his friend Tiberio was sent to join him. Alongside Papeiha, Williams also delivered two men and four women, who although originally from Rarotonga, had converted to Christianity on Aitutaki. Remarkably, by the time Tyerman and Bennet arrived at Rarotonga the following year, as part of the deputation to visit all the LMS mission stations, they were told that under Papeiha and Tiberio’s instruction the whole population had renounced idolatry and were in the process of building a six hundred foot long chapel (Montgomery, 1831: 241). When

³¹³ (Latour, 2010: 69)

Williams, Pitman and their wives landed in 1827, Christianity seems to have taken a strong hold in Rarotonga, despite the absence until that point of any European missionaries. On the Thursday after their arrival, the whole community relocated to a new settlement they had built on the eastern side of the island. On the journey, made by foot, a great deal of interest was shown in the possessions of the European missionaries by the many Rarotongans who offered to carry them. According to the description published by Williams, on arrival at the new settlement:

we found that the teachers had very comfortable houses, one of which they most cheerfully gave up to us. A day or two afterwards, they requested us to take our seat outside the door; and on doing so, we observed a large concourse of people coming towards us, bearing heavy burdens. They walked in procession, and dropped at our feet fourteen immense idols, the smallest of which was above five yards in length. Each of these was composed of a piece of *aito*, or iron-wood, about four inches in diameter, carved with rude imitations of the human head at one end, and with an obscene figure at the other, wrapped around with native cloth, until it became two or three yards in circumference. Near the wood were red feathers, and a string of small pieces of polished pearl shells, which were said to be the *manava*, or soul of the god. Some of these idols were torn to pieces before our eyes; others were reserved to decorate the rafters of the chapel we proposed to erect; and one was kept to be sent to England, which is now in the Missionary Museum. It is not, however, so respectable in appearance as when in its own country; for his Britannic Majesty's officers, fearing lest the god should be made a vehicle for defrauding the king, very unceremoniously took it to pieces; and not being so well skilled in making gods as in protecting the revenue, they have not made it so handsome as when it was an object of veneration to the deluded Rarotongans.

(Williams, 1837: 116-117)

Williams provided an illustration of 'one of the national idols' from Rarotonga, as well as the 'soul of the idol' on the following page (see Plate 56). While this image does not show the phallus which would originally have been carved at the bottom of the staff, it does suggest that the bark cloth wrappings may originally have been wider at the top than at the bottom. The event Williams described was also depicted on the title page of his *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises*, in which the Rarotongan men

are shown wearing the *tiputas* discussed by Thomas (1999), and modelled by Williams in England (see Plate 55, facing p.210). The 'immense idol', as has been shown, took up pride of place in the LMS Museum for the rest of the nineteenth century. Twenty eight years later it was encountered by a young Rarotongan traveller, the first 'idol' from his birthplace he had ever seen. While this 'immense idol', which is now at the BM, formed part of a ceremonial performance of destruction in Rarotonga, enacted for the benefit of Williams and Pitman, its subsequent biography has extended far beyond this iconoclastic event.

Collecting as Iconoclasm

Food for the Flames, a recent book by David Shaw King (2011), concentrates on 'Idols and Missionaries in Central Polynesia' during the early nineteenth century. Reproduced opposite the title page of this book is the central part of an image originally published in *Missionary Sketches* in July 1819 (See plate 57). This shows a fire into the flames of which a number of 'idols' are in the process of being cast. Like the image reproduced on the title page of Williams' (1837) *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises* (Plate 55, facing p.210), and like the diorama of 'Burning Idols' created for the *Orient in London* exhibition (Plate 57), this creates a powerful visual association between missionary activity and the renunciation and destruction of items of pre-Christian religious veneration. In an article with the title 'Collecting as Iconoclasm', Steven Hooper (2008) has argued that the collecting activities of LMS missionaries in early nineteenth century Polynesia should be understood as a form of iconoclasm. He acknowledged that 'collecting as iconoclasm' poses a paradox since collecting is normally associated with preservation, and iconoclasm with destruction.

Nevertheless, he proposed the term 'iconoclastic preservation', suggesting that 'for iconoclasts there is often a strong motivation to preserve evidence of the work of destruction, especially evidence of desecration, humiliation and triumph' (Hooper, 2008).

This association of missionary collecting with iconoclasm is an important starting point from which to understand the function of the collection accumulated at the LMS museum. However, it is one that I hope to move beyond in a number of connected ways. In particular, I intend to suggest that while some collecting may have been strongly associated with iconoclasm in the rhetoric and imagery deployed by members of the LMS, in practice it was a rather different, though frequently parallel process. This difference made a difference in a number of significant ways. These include, but are not limited to, a contemporary consequence, suggested by Hooper, that has allowed some missionary collected objects to 'take their place among the world's great art traditions' (Hooper, 2008). While I will return to this in the final chapter, I hope to suggest that this 'place' is perhaps just the latest in a series of locations that the 'moving objects of the London Missionary Society' have occupied since the time they were collected. Collecting things enabled them to be redeployed in other places at other times. As such, their contemporary deployment by art historians and indigenous artists deserves to be understood in relation to histories, or perhaps biographies, during which objects have moved through space, time, and various forms of categorization. In short, 'the Moving Objects of the London Missionary Society' are things that cannot be understood purely in terms of their function in any particular context, whether pre-Christian Rarotonga or the LMS Museum during the nineteenth century.

Hooper's account concentrated on three examples of things that were sent from the Pacific to the LMS museum: the Rarotongan staff god referred to above (Plate 58), Pomare's 'family gods' (Plate 16, facing p.104), and a casket figure from Rurutu known as A'a (Plate 66, facing p.246)³¹⁴. Each of these examples have featured in other recent accounts such as those of Nicholas Thomas (1991: 151-162), whose discussion of 'Converted Artifacts' dwelt on Pomare's family 'idols', and Alfred Gell (1998: 137), who described A'a as a fractal god (see Chapter 7). As shown in Chapters 3-5, the same objects also featured prominently in nineteenth century missionary publications and displays. Whether they can be taken to stand for all collecting activities associated with the LMS, however, is extremely doubtful. Jeffrey Cox has suggested that 'The image of David Livingstone', the most famous human associated with the LMS, 'has done great damage to serious efforts to understand the nature of the missionary enterprise' (Cox, 2008: 14). In a parallel move, I hope to suggest that the prominence of these Polynesian 'gods', perhaps the most famous nonhumans associated with the LMS, has similarly damaged serious efforts to understand the nature of missionary collecting as a whole. The exceptional qualities of certain humans and nonhumans has given them a peculiar prominence and pre-eminence in human memory and history, but it is precisely their exceptionalness that makes them so memorable. Art historical discourses may engage with and explore these exceptional qualities, but the focus in much historical work over the last century has moved from the exceptional to the representative and everyday. While the problems associated with the 'great man view of history' have been recognized, it has perhaps taken rather longer to recognize that focussing on

³¹⁴ An object whose complex biography he has addressed in detail elsewhere: (Hooper, 2007)

'great objects' can lead to an equally distorting view of the past. For many museums, in which a good deal of work on the history of artefacts takes place, it is the most exceptional objects which frequently become the focus for particular exhibitions and publications, and therefore the subject of the majority of research.

While most missionaries never resembled 'the heroic, male itinerant evangelist' but were 'women... in settled homes... spending all their adult lives building Christian institutions, and dying in obscurity' (Cox, 2008: 14), most things collected by missionaries were not 'idols' and, where they have survived in contemporary museum collections, have tended to linger in obscure storage drawers. Indeed, a large number of the objects collected by missionaries have not survived. While episodes of iconoclasm were associated with the introduction of Christianity in particular areas of the world at specific historical moments, it is the peculiarity of these events that deserves attention. The vast majority of missionary collections were formed under much more mundane conditions of exchange. In South Africa, where LMS missionaries were active from almost as early as their contemporaries in Polynesia, the absence of forms of material culture that could easily be identified as objects of religious worship, or 'idols', meant that missionary collecting remained focussed on the wider category of 'curiosity'. Even in other areas of Polynesia, where religious practices were less focussed on material representations of deities, difficulties seem to have emerged in finding analogous items that could be renounced as part of the process of religious conversion (Neich, 2007).

Accounting for and understanding the range of missionary collecting practices means moving beyond iconoclasm as an explanatory framework. It also means moving beyond iconoclasm as a rhetorical and critical position. In suggesting that

'critique has run out of steam', Bruno Latour asked whether it is 'really the task of the humanities to add deconstruction to destruction? More iconoclasm to iconoclasm?' (Latour, 2004: 225). By identifying the missionary as iconoclast, or as Bilinda Straight (2008: 837) has suggested 'divinicide', it becomes possible for contemporary anthropologists and art historians to engage in their own, more subtle forms of iconoclasm. These implicitly involve criticizing the behaviour of missionaries while distancing themselves from the practices they describe. Focussing on missionary iconoclasm is arguably a form of 'othering' (See Maxwell's response in Straight, 2008: 853) by which extreme behaviours become the focus for attention and critique. While missionary discourses of 'othering' frequently emphasized 'idolatry', infanticide, ritual killing and cannibalism in order to emphasize difference (Thomas, 1991: 152), contemporary academic discourses can make missionaries appear particularly 'other' through a focus on iconoclasm, arguably the most extreme practice associated with encounters involving artefacts. Beyond iconoclasm, there are many more practices such as those involved in the collection, labelling, classification, cataloguing and display of collections, and many of these are shared with the contemporary practices of anthropologists, archaeologists, art historians and museum curators. Getting to grips with the complexities involved in missionary collecting means moving beyond the iconoclastic critical position adopted in much European academia towards the cultural practices of Christianity in general, and of missionaries in particular. Nevertheless, this can be an uncomfortable position to adopt since it suggests that 'we', by which I mean contemporary scholars, are not as 'post-colonial', or even as 'secular' as many discourses of contemporary identity might want to suggest. Rather, it would seem to suggest that some of the iconoclastic discourses of post-colonialism

are themselves continuations of critical positions associated with the colonial period. This implies that post-colonialism is not colonialism 'at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant', as Lyotard (1984: 79) suggested in relation to postmodernism.

In advocating a move beyond iconoclasm, I am suggesting that rather than continuing a critical stance that ultimately becomes a circular exercise directed at earlier forms of iconoclasm, the best way of studying missionary iconoclasm and collecting may not be iconoclastically. While anthropology may have recently become actively engaged with Christianity as a topic of study (Cannell, 2006, Engelke and Tomlinson, 2006, Robbins, 2008), particularly as it is practiced among non-western peoples, extending a sympathetic gaze to the behaviour of its most professionally threatening, and longest established 'other', the western missionary, is another matter (though see Keane, 2007). In Ann Stoler's book, *Along the Archival Grain*, she has suggested that critical approaches to colonial archives have been characterized by a commitment to reading them:

“against their grain” of imperial history, empire builders, and the priorities and perceptions of those who wrote them....students of colonialism located “structure” with colonizers and the colonial state, and “human agency” with subalterns, in small gestures of refusal and silence among the colonized.
(Stoler, 2009: 46-47)

This characterization has certainly been true of some accounts of missionaries, who have sometimes been regarded as straightforward agents of colonialism.

Nevertheless, Stoler has suggested that assuming we know the grain against which to read can involve falling back into 'predictable stories with familiar plots' and has suggested the need to adopt a more humble stance, and 'to explore the grain with care and read along it first' (Stoler, 2009: 50). Predictable stories with familiar plots

connecting missionaries with colonialism, idolatry and divinicide undoubtedly contain germs of truth, but in working 'along the grain' it becomes necessary to locate these with care. Similarly, Latour has argued that to go beyond iconoclasm as a critical stance, we need a 'renewed empiricism' and 'a stubbornly realist attitude' (2004: 248). By excavating the LMS collection archaeologically, and reassembling it 'along the grain' in presenting an account which situates objects from its collection in relation to processes and events involving a range of human and nonhuman participants, I have attempted a move in the direction advocated by both Latour and Stoler.

While I want to suggest that understanding missionary collecting and collections necessarily means moving beyond iconoclasm, both as an explanatory framework and as a critical position, I nevertheless recognize that it is not possible to ignore iconoclasm, and the way in which it has shaped the gathering of things. Similarly, it seems important to recognize that many of the things from the LMS collection have been understood as 'objects' for much of their biographies, and therefore to examine the processes of alienation by which this transformation was attempted, even if the 'conversion' of things by missionaries into missionary objects was never entirely successful. As I suggested in Chapter 2, the labels applied to the objects in the LMS collection have provided a means for moving beyond a focus on iconoclasm since they are suggestive of the ways in which objects have been classified and re-classified, but also circulated during the two centuries since some of them were sent to London. At the same time, studying old labels makes it necessary to look beyond iconoclasm for another more practical reason. Many of the 'idols' associated with the LMS, precisely because they are the most visually striking objects in the collection,

have had their old labels removed so that they can be displayed in the most aesthetically appealing manner. If however, one concentrates on objects that are more commonly ignored and remain at the back of dark storage drawers, old labels abound as evidence of categorization, classification and instances of bureaucratic processing. Bringing these lesser-known objects of the LMS into the spotlight, and setting them back in relation to the textual documents in which they were inscribed, as well as the things they were listed alongside, makes it possible to gain a sense of the institutional lives of objects in the LMS collection, and the life of the LMS collection itself. These have taken place, over time, because things were collected rather than destroyed in the first place.

Iconoclasm and Collecting

Hooper has suggested that in early nineteenth century Polynesia 'There appears to have been a growing belief among the missionaries that the overthrow of idolatry could be achieved not only by the physical destruction of idols, but by an equivalent process of preservation, desecration and disempowerment' (2008: Paragraph 6). This description of a shift in behaviour is historically accurate, but what concerns me is the equivalence suggested between these two processes. The presentation of the Rarotongan 'idols' to John Williams, described and depicted above, involved processes of iconoclasm and preservation unfolding alongside one another. While iconoclasm was performed for those who were assembled as witnesses, the preservation of a staff god for the LMS museum seems to have formed part of a performance directed at a widely dispersed audience of LMS supporters and potential supporters. From Williams' description, it is clear that it was

Polynesians, and perhaps particularly the Raiatean teachers Papeiha and Tiberio who were primarily involved in orchestrating this event. In a letter Williams wrote to Papeiha and his colleague Vahapata in 1821, immediately prior to their departure to Aitutaki, Williams had advised:

do not let the whole of your discourse be directed against the Evil Spirit [defined in a footnote as 'the whole system of idolatry'] that alone but exalt our Lord Jesus Christ. If you obtain idols burn some (but not the best) before their faces that they may see the consuming of them lest they should think in case of being overtaken with sickness or any other evil of their gods, who are still in existence, have inflicted it. Leave the greatest part and send to Raiatea as an encouragement to us and we will send them to England as a rejoicing...

Translation by Williams (1823). Quoted in King (2011: 54)

The practice of renouncing religious objects seems to have been regarded as essential to the logic of conversion by many of the Polynesian teachers who were ultimately responsible for taking Christianity to other parts of the Pacific. It is striking that as well as issuing instructions as to what was to be done with idols, Williams also cautioned the Raiateans against solely speaking against idolatry without exalting 'our Lord Jesus Christ'. According to Hooper, the destruction of temples and the confiscation of 'valuable ritual property' was a tactic employed in intra-Polynesian warfare, and it seems likely that Polynesian understandings of religious conversion were built on existing understandings of submission following conquest (Hooper, 2008: Paragraph 9). The incorporation of religious items into Chapels, which Williams described, resonates with early missionary descriptions of wars in Tahiti, during which 'idols' were captured and re-located to the *marae* or ceremonial enclosure of the victors. Interestingly, Jeffrey Sissons (2007: 57) has suggested that the 'idols' presented to Williams at Rarotonga were captured during a military campaign waged by Rarotongan converts and led by the Raiatean pastors against Rarotongan pagans. These may have been kept for a number of years as captives before their

final destruction, a deliberate and strategic public display staged for the benefit of Williams, who may have been treated as a chief priest of the missionaries. The terminology used in the publications of many British missionaries who worked in Polynesia at this time referred to idols as 'trophies of Christianity' won by bloodless means. The category of trophy may have translated reasonably well from both European and Polynesian notions of military conquest, onto the ways in which religious conversion was subsequently understood. While the speed with which iconoclasm became established in Polynesia suggests that it was not entirely alien to local logics of practice, it nevertheless appears that the Rarotongan 'idol' which ended up in the LMS museum was preserved from destruction at Williams' instigation, and certainly for his benefit.

This desire to preserve and collect 'idols' among LMS missionaries appears to have been initiated by Pomare's suggestion in February 1816 that missionaries might either burn his 'family gods' 'or, if you like send them to your country, for the inspection of the people of Europe'.³¹⁵ Pomare appears to have been engaged in an experimental series of exchanges with LMS representatives, and his actions may have drawn on established Polynesian practices. He had already redeployed the principal 'idol' of Tahiti to hang baskets of food on and destroyed many other 'idols', including 'the great national ones'.³¹⁶ It may have made little difference to Pomare what became of his 'household gods' once they were no longer in his hands, though his suggestion that they be sent to England seems to have been part of a deliberate attempt to extend the range of his relationship with the LMS beyond the missionaries who were resident locally. In this, he was at least partially successful. Subsequent

³¹⁵ Evangelical: February 1818, p.85, 'Otaheite'

³¹⁶ Evangelical: August 1818, p.358, 'Intrepidity of Farefau in the Destruction of Idols. Extracted from the Journal of the Missionaries in Otaheite'

correspondence suggests that in return he received a pocket watch from Thomas Haweis (1734 – 1820), a director and founder of the LMS and an enthusiast for mission in the Pacific. When Haweis asked for more idols he was sent a ‘little idol... Taroa’ and two Royal fans, but Pomare asked to be sent two bibles and a book of geography in return.³¹⁷ Following their transportation, (ironically) first to New South Wales, and then to London, the spectacle and interest that surrounded Pomare’s household ‘idols’ seems to have impressed on those involved with the LMS how much difference transportation, rather than destruction, could make as a mode of removal. Nevertheless, these events took place in Australia and Britain, and their significance has not always been recognized by those whose main concern has been understanding the interactions between missionaries and Polynesians that took place in the Pacific.

Pomare’s idols, and the interest they generated for missionary activity in Britain, demonstrated that idols were more use ‘alive’ than ‘dead’. Following the depiction of ‘The Family Idols of Pomare’ in *Missionary Sketches* in October 1818, LMS Missionaries, wherever they were active in the world, seem to have become involved in an effort to locate similar objects for the LMS museum. While those sent immediately by the Bengal Auxiliary were models, presumably purchased for the purpose, in many other cases this involved representatives of the LMS intervening to prevent the destruction of idols, thereby quelling the iconoclastic urges of recent converts to Christianity. In his *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises*, John Williams notes that it was the intervention of Polynesian Christian teachers at Savai’i in Samoa that prevented local converts sinking ‘the god of war’ in the sea (Williams,

³¹⁷ Evangelical: February 1820, p.81, ‘Otaheite’

1837: 437). Preserved for ceremonial public presentation to Williams when he visited, this was sent back to the museum in London. When Williams encountered ‘five female goddesses hanging by the neck’ at the Hapai islands in Tonga, while visiting Methodist missionaries there, he requested one which he took to England where it was used to illustrate his *Narrative* ‘with the very string around its neck by which it was hung’ (Williams, 1837: 319) (see Plate 59).³¹⁸ When converts to Christianity in a village nine miles from Calcutta decided to destroy a temple containing a Shiva Lingam in 1825, ‘the idol was hurled from its throne, and given to Mr. Trawin, thus fulfilling the prophecy, ‘The gods who made not the heavens and the earth, shall perish from under those heavens, and from off that earth!’ (Statham, 1832: 409).³¹⁹ The irony, however, was that this particular ‘god’ did not perish ‘from off the earth’, but was sent instead to the LMS museum.

Even at the end of the nineteenth century, the despatch of abandoned ‘idols’ to the missionary museum remained established LMS practice. A printed label attached to the back of a Chinese Buddha, now in the BM, declares that it is:

One of many Idols handed over to
Dr. GRIFFITH JOHN
in March, 1896, by converts in the King Shan and Tien Men districts of the
HANKOW MISSION³²⁰

Polynesian teachers, in particular, seem to have regarded the physical removal of idols as an essential part of their work as missionaries. A letter from Hiro to the men of Rarotonga, translated by James Chalmers in 1900, recounted his attempt to acquire an idol in New Guinea:

³¹⁸ There is a suggestion that the fact they were hanging may have been more significant to Williams than to Polynesians, for whom the fact that they had been unwrapped may have mattered more (Neich, 2007).

³¹⁹ Jeremiah 10:11

³²⁰ BM: Accession number: As1910,-.518

After the service I was looking about and saw a carved piece of wood which looked like an idol. I asked them to give it to me, which they did, when I found it was not an idol, but a thing to hang skulls on. The boat's captain drew near to me and said: "There is a real idol over yonder." It was in another house. I went with him and saw that it was an idol. As there was no one in the house, I went to fetch the owner or owners of the house. When they came I offered them a tomahawk for it; but they said: "No, we cannot part with that which is the life of our land and gives us all our food." I told them of the true God, that He alone was good and merciful and gave us all things. I told them of Jesus who died for us.

We had a service, and afterwards I again asked for the idol, and offered a tomahawk and a few small things. But they said if they parted with it it would only be for a very big price. So I gave them one tomahawk, some calico, tobacco, and beads, and they let me have it. I told them it was a big price, seeing it was not a pig which we could eat, but only a piece of wood...We got into the boat with the idol, but we could see the people were very unsettled about our taking it away. I ordered all to the oars, and we made a quick departure.....³²¹

While the renunciation of idols by Christian converts may have been regarded as evidence of a genuine conversion and acceptance of a state of Grace by early nineteenth century supporters of the LMS, for Hiro, the acquisition of idols seems to have been an end in itself, negotiated as much through the exchange of goods as an attempt to win hearts and souls for Christ.

The collecting of religious idols, which became a significant part of missionary activity in many different parts of the world, seems to have owed a great deal to Central Polynesian, and perhaps particularly Tahitian practices. An experimental act of exchange on the part of Pomare in 1816 appears to have reoriented the focus of the missionary museum for the rest of the nineteenth century. Because of connections established through the network of the LMS, Pomare's 'gift' resulted in an impact that would be felt around the world in ways that must have been unanticipated in Tahiti. Exploring the LMS collection 'along the grain', has suggested

³²¹ Chronicle: 1900, pp.196-7, 'The story of a New Guinea Idol'

that far from Tahitian agency being limited to 'small gestures of refusal and silence' (Stoler, 2009: 46-47), it had profound consequences, reshaping 'structures' in other parts of the world. Collecting or transportation, rather than iconoclasm or destruction, made a significant difference that could be measured by its effects. At least one Polynesian, the Chief of Aitutaki seems to have been alert to the unpredictable consequences that the transportation of his 'idols' might bring, reportedly begging Williams 'to allow the idols to be burned in cooking food, and not sent to England' (Williams, 1837: 109).

Although the shift in the missionary treatment of religious objects, from iconoclasm to transportation, can be understood in relation to historical changes associated with the introduction of Christianity to Polynesia, a symmetrical approach demands that this change also be considered in relation to events in Europe. The public destruction of idols in Polynesia may owe something to pre-existing local practices associated with warfare, as Hooper (2008) has suggested, as well as to the inspiration of ancient biblical texts propounded by missionaries. Nevertheless, public acts involving the spectacular destruction of artefacts were by no means unknown in Europe prior to the nineteenth century. The bonfire of the vanities in Florence in 1497 is perhaps the most famous of these events, but in England the reformation and civil war of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries involved the public destruction of a great many nonhumans alongside the many humans who were publicly put to death by all sides. During a hundred years that saw the destruction of religious images by Protestants and religious texts by Catholics (Davis, 2006), the most famous religious image in England, the Cheapside Cross (Plate 60), survived at least five iconoclastic attacks (Budd, 2000: 380). It was finally destroyed by order of parliament on 2 May

1643 in front of a large approving crowd. Less than six years later the King, with whom the Cheapside Cross was associated through ceremonial processions, would share its fate (Plate 61). The cross had been central to debates about religious images in the 1640s, and was even accused by the leveller leader Richard Overton in 1642 of having caused the English civil war (Spraggon, 2003: 45). Many LMS missionaries, as members of the Dissenting and Presbyterian churches, were the genealogical and religious descendants of these civil war iconoclasts. It is striking, therefore, that in early nineteenth century Polynesia, and elsewhere, we find them collecting and preserving idols in the face of attempts by converts to drown, hang and burn them. Webb Keane (2007: 13) has suggested that 'the mission encounter replays themes of encounter and reflexivity that run through the long history of religious form within the West that began well before the colonial and postcolonial era'. Nevertheless, that abandoned idols were felt to belong in a museum by the 1820s, and were effectively cut from the scaffold, saved from drowning, as well as being burned to destruction by LMS missionaries is suggestive of a considerable shift in the way that problematic artefacts, associated with idolatry, were dealt with.

Navigating the Carcerial Archipelago

Foucault began *Discipline and Punish* (1991 [1975]) with a description of the public dismemberment and destruction by fire of the body of Damians the regicide in March 1757. He contrasted this with a set of rules from 1837 'for the House of young prisoners in Paris', suggesting that public execution and the timetable each defined a certain penal style (Foucault, 1991 [1975]: 7). The two were, he suggested, separated by less than a century when 'the entire economy of punishment was

redistributed' in Europe and the United States, 'a time of innumerable projects for reform' (Foucault, 1991 [1975]: 7).³²² While Foucault's argument was concerned with the treatment of human bodies in Europe, iconoclasm and removal to a museum, when applied to the bodies of nonhuman artefacts are very suggestive of these contrasting penal styles. Although the immediate preference of many recent converts seems to have been for the public dismemberment and destruction of 'idols', their transportation to the LMS Museum in London occurred largely at the instigation of British missionaries such as John Williams. The initial move towards transportation may have been prompted by Pomare's 'gift', but it nevertheless seems to have resonated with a penal style that involved the incarceration, regulation and transportation of bodies, rather than their public destruction. As such, the establishment of a missionary museum to which idols were transported from around the world, rather than being destroyed where they were found, demands to be considered in relation to Foucault's genealogies for other institutions of incarceration (Foucault, 1975, 1991 [1975], 2001 [1961]).

Foucault's ideas are of course familiar in relation to the study of museums, particularly through the work of Tony Bennett. Nevertheless, Bennett suggested that museums should be understood as institutions 'not of confinement but of exhibition' with histories that 'run in opposing directions' (1995: 59 & 61). He argued that what he called the 'exhibitionary complex' might 'more fruitfully be juxtaposed to, rather than aligned with, the formation of Foucault's 'carcerial archipelago', through which the 'public display of power' was 'withdrawn from the public gaze' (Bennett, 1988:

³²² Subsequent work has suggested that the nineteenth and twentieth century saw the greatest increase in the numbers of those confined and segregated in various institutions (Brunton, 2004: 300). See especially (Porter, 1987).

73). In dismissing the suggestion that museums be considered as part of the 'carcerial archipelago', Bennet argued that this:

seems to imply that works of art had previously wandered the streets of Europe like the Ships of Fools in Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*; or that geological and natural specimens had been displayed before the world, like the condemned on the scaffold, rather than being withheld from public gaze, secreted in the *studiolo* of princes, or made accessible only to the limited gaze of high society in the *cabinets des curieux* of the aristocracy.
(Bennett, 1988: 73)

While the *studiolo* and the *cabinets des curieux* offer one genealogy for the birth of the museum, another connects it not to the power of the state, but to that of the church, as I have suggested in Chapter 4. In the case of the medieval Catholic practices, objects that were otherwise stored in churches and cathedrals, such as relics, did wander the streets as part of ceremonial processions. Afterwards, they returned to Church buildings, which operated as vessels, in which things associated with other times and other places, but also associated with the sacred 'other' - God - could be contained.

In his discussion *Of Other Spaces*, Foucault suggested that:

in the Middle Ages there was a 'hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane places; protected places and open, exposed places; urban places and rural places....

There were places where things had been put because they had been violently displaced, and then on the contrary places where things found their natural ground and stability.

(Foucault, 1986: 22)

According to Foucault, this 'space of emplacement' was 'opened up by Galileo' whose discoveries dissolved the places of the Middle Ages by constituting 'an infinite, and infinitely open space' where 'a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down' (Foucault, 1986: 23). Nevertheless, Foucault commented that

'contemporary space is perhaps still not entirely desanctified' and that oppositions between different types of space, such as private and public space 'are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred' (1986: 23). In attempting to understand the creation of 'other' spaces within museums during the nineteenth century, such as that of the LMS, it therefore becomes important to consider the degree to which these drew on principles involved in creating and ordering sacred space.

In contrasting 'the exhibitionary complex' to the 'carcerial archipelago', Bennett concentrated on the ways in which museums were intended to create particular kinds of human subject by regulating the bodies of their human visitors. The place of the museum in the 'carcerial archipelago' becomes much clearer, however, if attention is directed to the confinement and regulation of nonhuman objects, rather than the making of human subjects. This has arguably been more central to the function of many museums than the limited hours during which they were open to visitors. For most of the nineteenth century, the LMS Museum was open for very limited time, when attendance was only possible with a ticket issued by one of the Directors of the Society. This pattern of exhibition more closely resembles the 'exhibitionary' aspects of the hospital at Bethlehem (Foucault, 2001 [1961]: 64), which was open to public visits, than it does those of the contemporary department store.³²³ For much of its existence, the function of the LMS museum as a container for things, many of which had been removed from other parts of the world, seems to have been more important than its role as a place of exhibition. When the 'exhibitionary' function of the collection was prioritized in the early twentieth century, the LMS museum closed shortly afterwards, overtaken by the possibilities offered by mobile temporary

³²³ For a suggestion that this practice ceased in 1770s see a review by Andrew Scull in TLS 'The Fictions of Foucault's Scholarship', 21 March 2007.

exhibitions. As part of a move 'beyond iconoclasm', it becomes necessary to return to a time before the 'exhibitionary complex' dominated the study of museums, and suggest that the LMS museum be understood as an institution of confinement, at least as much as of exhibition. The missionary museum provides an alternative genealogy to the princely collection for the emergence of the public museum in the late-nineteenth century, although perhaps a somewhat illegitimate one.

Missionary Vessels

An illuminating parallel to practices of missionary collecting has been described by Bruno Latour as part of his discussion of what he called 'The Domestication of the Savage Mind'. This describes the arrival of Lapérouse, captain of L'Astrolabe, at Sakhalin in the Eastern Pacific on 17 July 1787 (Latour, 1987: 215). Anxious to know whether Sakhalin was a peninsula, Lapérouse questioned the local Chinese who not only confirmed it was an island, but helpfully sketched a map in the sand of the beach. When the rising tide threatened to erase this, one of the locals sketched the map in a notebook, with an indication of its scale. While the knowledge the navigators acquired from those on the beach might have enabled them to set a different course, had the sketch been destroyed by the rising tide, its consequences would have been confined to resolving a fairly immediate practical concern. Nevertheless, drawing the map in a notebook allowed this knowledge to be transported and recombined with other geographical knowledge, at other times and in other places. The map drawn in the sand formed part of an event with a fairly constrained set of temporal and geographic dimensions, and functioned to demonstrate something to those who are gathered in one place to observe it, much

like the performance of iconoclasm in Rarotonga in 1827. The drawing in the notebook, however, was both durable and mobile, much like an 'idol' which has been preserved and collected, and so could be removed from the context in which it had been created. Latour (1987: 218) argued that 'Although there is at the beginning not much difference between the abilities of the French and the Chinese navigators, the difference will grow if Lapérouse is part of a network through which the ethnogeography of the Pacific is accumulated in Europe.' Similarly, it was not the initial gift of Pomare's 'household gods', which as Hooper (2008) suggested took place in conditions of fluid and unpredictable exchange, from which asymmetries between Polynesians and British missionaries would grow. Rather, the translations of these 'objects' through the global network established by the LMS enabled their deployment as part of appeals to supporters, and this had the indirect consequence of reinforcing the position of the missionaries back in the Pacific. Returning from the Pacific in 1834 with a range of things, including a set of notebooks, John Williams was able to spend four years travelling around the British Isles appealing for additional funds through talks, lectures and the publication of his *Narrative*. When enough money had been raised to purchase and fit out a new missionary ship, the *Camden*, Williams returned to the Pacific in a stronger position than he had left it.

The mobility of objects from the LMS collection, like that of Lapérouse's map, came from their ability to 'hitch a ride' in other vessels. John Law (1986: 6) has emphasised the importance of ships to methods of long-distance social control because of their capacity to generate an 'envelope of mobility and durability' that is 'relatively independent of their surroundings'. Although Law developed his analysis in relation to Portuguese expansion in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it has a

great deal of relevance to the operation of the LMS during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in the Pacific. The first missionary ship, The Duff, carried its cargo of LMS missionaries to Tahiti in 1796. However, by 1910 an appeal for funds directed at juvenile supporters contrasted the British fleet to an LMS fleet (Plate 62), which:

sails and steams about not to destroy but to save, which instead of carrying torpedoes, explosive mines, cannon, shells, and every conceivable weapon of death carries “good tidings of great joy,” carries everything that suggests helpfulness – stores, Bibles, and missionaries, who are the best kind of “life preservers” a vessel can have.³²⁴

These vessels not only provided a means of transporting and delivering missionaries, bibles and stores, the raw materials of a Christian and Civilized life. They also provided the means of bringing other things back. The relationship between ships and missionary collecting is powerfully captured in a posthumous portrait of John Williams by Henry Anelay showing him on deck, surrounded by Polynesian artefacts (See Plate 63, facing p.233). This image seems to have been a composite one that was populated with objects from the LMS museum and elsewhere, as well as from illustrations in Williams’ *Narrative* (King, 2011: 143). It was presumably inspired by an episode described in Williams’ *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises* where, on his return to Raiatea:

as other warriors feel a pride in displaying trophies of the victories they win, we hung the rejected idols of Aitutaki to the yard-arms and other parts of the vessel, entered the harbour in triumph, sailed down to the settlement, and dropped anchor, amidst shouts and congratulations of our people.
(Williams, 1837: 106-107)

The ship, as a container, vessel or envelope which transported humans and nonhumans from one place to another, was essential to the operation of the LMS as

³²⁴ Pamphlet in the author’s possession: ‘New Year’s Offering, 1910. For maintaining the missionary ships, and for orphanages and children’s homes in the mission field’, Dated September 1909. p.4

a network. The potency of these ships, when compared to local canoes, seems to have been recognized by Polynesians and Europeans alike (Thomas, 1999: 15). It was the possession of ships, as John Williams seems to have realized, that enabled the expansion of the LMS and Christianity across Polynesia. Ships could transport things between different islands, connecting them into a single mission field.

Foucault has suggested that the ship has been 'the main means of economic growth' for Europe, 'but at the same time the greatest reserve of imagination for our civilization from the sixteenth century down to the present day' (1986: 27). He also characterized the ship as 'the heterotopia par excellence', 'a floating part of space, a placeless place, that lives by itself, closed in on itself and at the same time poised in the infinite ocean' (1986: 27). While ships function as vessels that contain and move things, they are also moving things in their own right, both emotionally and physically. It is possibly for this reason that they were frequently celebrated in missionary propaganda and imagery, and may explain why John Williams is best imagined (posthumously) aboard a ship surrounded by artefacts. It is certainly significant that following his death in 1839, the principal ships of the LMS in the Pacific were named after him from 1844 until 1968, when 'John Williams VII' retired from service.

Ships were not the only vessels - durable and mobile envelopes - upon which the survival of the LMS depended. While ships were used to get humans and nonhumans between London and other parts of the world, as well as between the islands of the Pacific, and are significant in the formation of one sort of collection, rather smaller vessels were needed to collect contributions from supporters. The money gathered in missionary collecting boxes ultimately made the operation of

these larger vessels possible.³²⁵ It is surely significant that one of the earliest surviving collecting boxes depicts a ship, perhaps John Williams I, while a later one takes the shape of a ship, possibly modelled on John William IV (Plate 64). The missionary ship could stand for overseas missionary activity, and its association with the collecting box suggests its potency for the imagination. From 1844 onwards, the annual appeal to children was explicitly promoted as a means of purchasing and supporting the missionary ships.³²⁶ The importance of these ships as objects that had a particular emotional appeal possibly explains why depictions and models of the missionary ship were so frequently associated with LMS publications, but also exhibitions.³²⁷ In 1847, a model of the *John Williams* ship was placed in the midst of the Pacific idols, and in the 1853 illustration of the LMS Museum there appears to be an image of John Williams I hanging to the left of the Rarotongan 'staff god' (see Plate 23, facing p.119). In 1860, a model of the missionary ship stood at the centre of a case of material from the Pacific (See Plate 25, facing p.122), and at the Centenary celebration in 1895, a model of the John Williams was launched into the fountain of the Crystal Palace (See Plate 48, facing p.184). Model ships feature prominently in the 1903 photograph of the museum (See Plate 49, facing p.185) and were exhibited at LMS exhibitions during that decade (see Plate 40, facing p.157). Well into the second half of the twentieth century, when there was no museum to speak of, prayer

³²⁵ See Prochaska (1978: 110) on the significance of missionary boxes and children's support of the missionary movement more generally.

³²⁶ At the first appeal £6,237 was raised, which purchased and equipped the first John Williams, a 296 ton three masted barque, that survived twenty years until she was wrecked in May 1864 (Horne, 1904: 223). John Williams II was launched in late 1865, but was wrecked at Niué a year later (Horne, 1904: 225). John Williams III launched in October 1868, and only sold in 1894. The 663 ton steamship, John William IV was launched in 1893 and sold in 1930. John Williams V was wrecked on Samoa in 1948, when she was succeeded by John Williams VI. The final ship, John Williams VII was built in 1962, and decommissioned in 1968. See: <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=240492>

³²⁷ For a selection of publications relating to the LMS ships, see: Prout (1865), Cousins (1894), Thompson (1900), & Mathews(1919).

times at Livingstone House were rung on a bell from the John Williams, and this survives today in the basement of the CWM building. If 'idols' were objects that moved the supporters of the LMS to make donations during the middle of the nineteenth century, ships remained moving objects long after the missionary museum had closed.

The global network of LMS mission stations was made possible through the movement of ships linking them to London, but also by the movement of money to the headquarters at Mission House from supporters across the British Isles. With this network in place, the presentation of Pomare's 'idols' to missionaries, their transportation from Tahiti, and the reaction that followed their display in Australia and Britain, as well as their reproduction as images in missionary publications, initiated what Latour has called a 'cycle of accumulation' (1987: 219). Missionaries in the Pacific, as well as in other parts of the world, sought to collect ever more 'idols' for transportation to the museum. While perhaps not 'immutable and combinatorial mobiles' in the strict sense suggested by Latour (1987: 227), the things they collected were nevertheless 'mobile' and 'durable' in Law's (1986: 6) terms, and so became a means through which influence could be exerted at a distance.³²⁸ Objects in the LMS museum gained a great deal of their value through their relocation to other places, where they became objects of interest and curiosity. Had the 'idols' been destroyed they would have retained as little value as the map sketched in the sand for Lapérouse. Similarly, had they been allowed to rot away in situ, or simply incorporated into new Christian chapels, their impact would have been predominantly

³²⁸ For a more recent discussion of Latour's concept of the "immutable mobile", see 'The elusive origins of the immutable mobile' (2001) by Michael John Gorman: <http://www.stanford.edu/group/STS/immutablemobile.htm>

local. Having been collected and transported to London, 'idols' as well as other 'objects' in the LMS collection become the basis for forms of knowledge about the non-Christian world that were established at, and circulated from 'Mission House' in London, the centre of the LMS network.

Rebuilding 'Other Places'

If one considers an uncropped version of the image King (2011) used in *Food for Flames* (See Plate 65), it is clear that the image depicts much more than the iconoclastic actions of Polynesians, casting 'idols' into a fire. This central scene frames two panels in the background on either side, and these display a degree of symmetry. The caption originally printed with the image describes the three scenes: *Destruction of the Idols at Otaheite; pulling down a Pagan Altar, and building a Christian Church*. There is a degree of narrative movement from left to right in the image, and it is noteworthy that the Tahitians on the right of the fire are shown with their bodies covered in more cloth than those to the left. One almost looks like an Ancient Greek wearing a *peplos*. Overseeing the church building are a pair of gentlemen in European dress, undoubtedly supposed to be LMS missionaries. One might venture that at some level the image presents an evangelical version of the *Progress of Civilization* which prefigured the pediment sculpture created for the British Museum by two decades (compare Plate 8, facing p.44). It is striking, however, that the focus of the two background panels is on the destruction of one sacred place and the construction of another. If the destruction of 'idols' formed one thrust of practical missionary work, the construction of chapels formed the other. Williams' description of his experiences at Rarotonga is suggestive of the degree to

which the impact of Christianity involved re-shaping local geographies. Not only did he arrive as people were streaming out of their six hundred foot long chapel, but they had also constructed a new settlement, complete with 'very comfortable houses' (Williams, 1837: 116) for the teachers (depicted in the background of Plate 55, facing p.210). Although the earliest editions of *Missionary Sketches* featured images of objects from the LMS museum on its front cover, it regularly featured images of orderly mission buildings from one mission field or another during the 1820s. While missionary ships may have been mobile envelopes that created a 'placeless place', mission settlements and buildings were attempts to enclose the space of 'other places', and create within them a location in which God could be manifested through grace.

In his discussion *Of Other Spaces*, Foucault (1986: 27) proposed the idea of 'heterotopia of compensation', the role of which 'is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed and jumbled.' He suggested that certain colonies might be thought of in this way, but it certainly seems to have been the case that mission stations had something of this quality. As places that were constructed, like ships, in the midst of space that was already 'other', there is a degree to which missions, like colonies, were not *heterotopias*, but *homotopias* - places in which an idealized version of the Christian and Civilized self could take shape. In order for this to be possible, however, these places had to undergo a process of purification. If the souls of human converts could be purified by water through baptism, the artefactual world needed to be purified by fire, in order for an orderly Christian community to arise from the ashes like a phoenix. At the same time, these acts of purification were undercut by the

connections that linked the missions, as bounded places, into a network with its centre in London. It could be asserted that iconoclasm in India had fulfilled the biblical prophecy that 'The gods who made not the heavens and the earth, shall perish from under those heavens, and from off that earth!' (Jeremiah 10:11), and 'The idols he shall utterly abolish' (Isaiah 2:18) could be juxtaposed with an image of iconoclasm in Williams *Narrative* (see Plate 55, facing p.210), but in both cases these things had not been destroyed, but simply existed in the an 'other place': the LMS Museum. In *We Have Never Been Modern* Latour (1993 [1991]: 11) argued that projects of purification take place alongside a proliferation of hybrids, but more recently, he has suggested that the iconoclast's hammer always strikes sideways (Latour, 2010: 70). If the removal of 'idols' allowed the creation of orderly locations of Christianity and Civilization in other parts of the world, what sort of place was created in London by the arrival of these things from other parts of the world?

If the transportation of 'idols' to London formed part of what Latour has called a 'cycle of accumulation' (1987: 219), then the LMS museum can be understood as a *heterotopia* of accumulation in Foucault's terms. Foucault suggested that 'the museum and the library are heterotopias that are proper to western culture of the nineteenth century' since they form part of a 'project of organizing... a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place' (Foucault, 1986: 26). They are the expressions of:

the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages... this whole idea belongs to our modernity.
(Foucault, 1986: 26)

That the LMS Museum was regarded as a demarcated space, outside of time, explains how missionaries were able to think of the things it contained as no longer in existence. Having been transported to a place where they were regulated by display labels, glass cases, regulated opening hours and museum catalogues, the accumulated objects of the LMS Museum were no longer regarded as occupying a place in contemporary London. Nevertheless, this impression was an illusion. Unlike the mission station which attempted to create a real space that was ordered and perfect, the museum created a space of illusion, outside of time and space. At the same time, the LMS museum was not simply a passive container in which things from other places and times were accumulated. It remained heavily involved in creating images of other parts of the world that were used to promote the organization of which it formed a part, an organization that had been established to radically transform the world, an outcome that it achieved to varying degrees in different places.

Latour (2005b: 176) has noted that some local sites seem to 'manufacture global structures', suggesting that these are not 'bigger' than any other places, but that they 'benefit from far safer connections with many *more* places than others'. The London headquarters of the LMS, connected to mission stations around the world, as well as supporters throughout the British Isles by a constant traffic of funds, letters, publications and goods, would seem to be one of these well connected local places. Through coordinating these circulations, 'Mission House' assumed a position of centrality in relation to the network as a whole. If the LMS was a society that was organized around a house (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995), or even a 'house society' (Lévi-Strauss, 1987: 165), which some of its characteristics, such as the

prominent portraits of institutional ancestors suggest that it was, then it was a house through which people and things were constantly moving. Latour (1987: 232) has described laboratories as 'centres of calculation' to which 'immutable and combinatorial mobiles' are brought and arranged in order to build precise knowledge that becomes the basis of further action on the world. In extending his analysis beyond the scientific laboratory he has characterized such places as *oligopticons*. This term is contrasted with Foucault's use of the notion of *panopticon* (Latour, 2005b: 181) to suggest that *oligopticons* do not see everything, but what they see they see well. Through the letters, reports, accounts and deputations it received, the London headquarters of the LMS functioned like the command centre used by Latour to illustrate this notion.

Alongside *oligopticons* as 'star-shaped control centres', Latour (2005b: 183) also introduced *panoramas*, another type of place in which global effects can be created. These create a convincing though flawed vision of the world in the process of telling a particular kind of story. The difference between the *oligopticon* and *panorama*, according to Latour is the difference between 'a war episode monitored from the U.S. Army war room in Tampa, Florida', and 'the same one related on Fox News when a retired general is commenting on the "day at the front"' (Latour, 2005b: 188). The offices of the LMS in London might usefully be understood as an *oligopticon*, or even as a *centre of calculation*, but the LMS museum appears to have been more of a *panorama*. While the *oligopticon* relies on technologies of vision, arrangement and analysis, the *panorama* functions through a technology of projection. Because the LMS was dependent on the voluntary contributions of its supporters as well as the actions of its overseas missionaries, the museum as

panorama needed to project 'take-home' messages that would ensure continued support. By using objects from its collection to create images that circulated in missionary publications, as well as making them physically available for missionary meetings, the LMS museum became the centre of a panoramic system of projection which enabled people in Britain to imagine life in mission fields, albeit in a somewhat flawed and distorted way.

The capacity of the London headquarters of the LMS, as a local place, to manufacture global effects depended as much on the scale of resources it was able to gather from its supporters, as on how securely it was connected to its mission stations. As such, 'Mission House' had to combine the functions of *oligopticon* and *panorama*. While the LMS museum must be understood in relation to a web of exchanges that extended as far as the Pacific, Africa, Asia and the Americas, it was also situated at the centre of a network that included supporters in Europe, and particularly in the British Isles. The museum was not simply a passive container for things that had been sent to London from around the world, but was a place where these became involved in the orchestration of panoramic effects intended to engage these supporters. The relocation, arrangement, and translation of things around the network allowed the museum to have a central function in creating particular forms of knowledge about the world. The history of the LMS museum is integrally related to the history of the 'Mission House', the centre of the LMS as a global network, and as such a bottleneck for most of the traffic around this network. While a relationship of exchange existed between the supporters of mission in Britain and its recipients in other places, these exchanges were generally mediated by 'Mission House'. Though the LMS was engaged in a project to make things happen in the non-Christian world,

it could only do this by making other things happen in the Christian world of Britain and Europe. Arguably, the previously Christian residents of Europe have ultimately been as affected by the events that were orchestrated from this 'house' in London, as the previously non-Christian residents of Africa, India, China and the Pacific.

Conclusion

Like Baxter's images of Williams at Erromanga and Tanna, the image of *The Destruction of Idols at Otaheite* (Plate 65, facing p.236) depicts an idealised vision of missionary activity in the Pacific. If, however, we imagine a symmetrical mirror image illustrating in an idealized way the effects of missionary activity on Britain, this would not show the destruction of 'idols' in a fire, but their arrival in ships. It might even show them being processed around missionary meetings and displayed in Christian Churches, with consequences that at least in one case in Birmingham threatened the destruction of these buildings. Instead of showing the destruction of a 'Pagan Altar', this image would show the construction of a museum in which 'idols' from other places were placed on display. As a demarcated space, in which artefacts are visited and contemplated by visitors, museums have rather more in common with the *marae* of the Pacific, than they do with the Chapels that were erected in their place. By the end of the nineteenth century, the number of museums established across the British Isles had greatly increased. In 1890 a number of the 'idols' that had been displayed in the LMS museum were incorporated into the collection of the BM, a state-funded institution in the capital of the British Empire. At the same time, other objects that had found their way to Britain through the missionary exhibitionary complex were

displayed in a range of local museums around the British Isles, which also increasingly became the recipients of public funding. While museums continued to proliferate during the twentieth century across the British Isles, attendance at Christian Churches declined precipitously. By 2007, only 26% of the UK population were estimated to have visited a church in the previous year (Tearfund, 2007), while 45% had visited a museum or gallery in the same period (DCMS, 2010). It would be almost impossible to demonstrate that this transformation in the ceremonial practices of British Islanders has been the direct result of the presence among them of 'idols' transported from other places, since many other factors have also been involved. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest that the transformation of the British Isles over the last two centuries has been connected in a symmetrical manner to transformations in other parts of the world, including those established by missionary societies like the LMS in the name of Christianity.

A concentration on events that have unfolded in the Pacific has made it possible for iconoclasm and collecting to be regarded as equivalent processes, both by LMS missionaries and more recent scholars. The significant differences between these two practices becomes much more apparent, however, when a symmetrical approach is adopted, considering the connections between events in the Pacific to those in Europe and other parts of the world. Iconoclasm was a performance enacted for an audience that were gathered in one place, a form of destruction and purification, but also a demonstration of intent in relation to adopting a new set of practices. Collecting, on the other hand, formed part of a performance that was enacted for an audience that was widely dispersed and geographically distant - the supporters of the LMS. Rather than being defined by spatial contiguity, or an

organization of space into territories that resembled those contained by the nation-state, the LMS was a society that organized itself around a series of 'other' spaces: the mission house and museum, overseas missions, and even the churches and church halls in which its supporters gathered for missionary meetings and annual sermons. These were the nodes in the network of the LMS, and its overall survival and function depended on the constant movement between them of goods and money, but also information in the form of letters, books and other publications.

Though my approach, involving excavation, reassembly and imaginative reconstruction, has owed a great deal to archaeological practices and the archaeological sensibility, at another level it has been informed by a set of questions asked by Social Anthropologists about the ways in which societies operate. Just as Malinowski (1922) was able to use the movements and exchanges of shell valuables to gain an understanding of Trobriand society, so 'moving objects' provide a lens through which to see the changing configurations that enabled the operation of the LMS. A focus on 'Mission House', at the heart of London, and the artefacts that formed part of its 'trophy case', but were circulated from there among its supporters, has provided a means of considering this society in movement. It has enabled me to consider the material life of the LMS as a society and the ways in which this has been shaped by intersections with the social lives of both biological and artefactual things. As a society, the LMS was never bounded or self-sufficient. Instead, it was interstitial, depending upon and growing from its ability to overlap with a range of other assemblages. Its voluntary and international character makes this clear, though these characteristics are not fundamentally different from the way in which many other societies operate. When Max Gluckman attempted to study Zululand Society,

he recognized that the best way to do this was to study the way in which its otherwise dispersed participants came together at a temporarily demarcated 'other' place to perform a ceremony. In attempting to study the London Missionary Society, I have similarly explored the ways in which its otherwise dispersed participants were assembled in similarly demarcated 'other' places. While the LMS collection included artefacts from all over the world, it was also an artefact in its own right, created through the collective action of various members of the London Missionary Society. What is more, it was an artefact of history (Strathern, 1990), with surprising effects that contributed in various ways to the transformation of the context in which it was formed.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

On Moving Objects

*What do you think of that figure there? I want to know,' Gerald asked...
'It conveys a complete truth,' said Birkin. 'It contains the whole truth of that
state, whatever you feel about it.'*

D.H. Lawrence, Women in Love

Homage to the British Museum

by William Empson

There is a Supreme God in the ethnological section;
A hollow toad shape, faced with a blank shield.
He needs his belly to include the Pantheon,
Which is inserted through a hole behind.
At the navel, at the points formally stressed, at the organs of sense,
Lice glue themselves, doll, local deities,
His smooth wood creeps with all the creeds of the world.

Attending there let us absorb the culture of nations
And dissolve into our judgement all their codes.
Then, being clogged with a natural hesitation
(People are continually asking one the way out),
Let us stand here and admit that we have no road.
Being everything, let us admit that is to be something,
Or give ourselves the benefit of the doubt;
Let us offer our pinch of dust all to this God,
And grant his reign over the entire building.³²⁹

³²⁹ Originally published in 1932 in *Poetica*, a Japanese periodical.

An example of *ekphrasis*, this poem was written in response to an encounter with A'a, a wooden carving from Rurutu, originally sent to the LMS museum in 1822 by John Williams and Lancelot Threlkeld, missionaries in Raiatea in the Pacific (see Plate 66, facing p.246). William Empson (1906-84) is best known for *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (Empson, 1930), a book of criticism that was written at around the same time as this poem. Although he incorporated many ambiguities into his poem, it seems that writing it was his own way of offering a 'pinch of dust' to A'a. In terms of A'a's 'reign over the entire building', it certainly occupied a preeminent place, at least during the twentieth century when Empson was far from alone in responding to its presence. The sculptor Henry Moore (1898 – 1986) also described being captivated by A'a from the 1930s onwards (Moore and Finn, 1981: 83). According to Moore it fascinated him so much that he had 'a bronze cast made of it' (1981: 83), but found it so powerful that 'it was difficult to find the right place in his house to put it' (Moore and Finn, 1981: 18).³³⁰ Moore seems to have recognized that A'a was not created for domestic display, suggesting that 'the excitement of the piece comes from its sense of life-force, with all those small figures springing from the parent figure' (Moore and Finn, 1981: 83). By the time Moore's bronze was made in around 1970 (Hooper, 2007: 148), A'a had become something of a celebrity within the international movement of modernist art. An account by Steven Hooper of 'The Life of A'a', has suggested that a plaster cast was acquired by Roland Penrose and displayed at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in the 1948-9 exhibition '40,000 years of Modern Art' (Hooper, 2007: 148). Penrose's cast was subsequently seen by Pablo Picasso, who ordered one for himself, and this appears in a photograph of his studio

³³⁰ Moore ended up keeping it in the liminal space of his hall.

in Cannes from around 1960 (Hooper, 2007: 148). Noting that ‘For the last century or more hardly a major book about Oceanic, Primitive or Tribal art has neglected to include A’a’, Hooper (2007: 149) suggested that the ‘approbation of Modernism, via Moore, Penrose, Picasso and others, has admitted A’a and its peers to the new cult of high art in global culture’ (Hooper, 2007: 150).

Even before the transfer of A’a to the BM in 1890 and the ‘approbation of Modernism’ during the twentieth century, A’a occupied a prominent, if not pre-eminent place at the LMS Museum. The catalogue dating from around 1860 describes the carving as:

22. TAAROA UPAO VAHU, from Rurutu, the supreme deity of Polynesia. In addition to the demi-gods that stud the outside, designed to show the many that had proceeded from him, a number of small idols were found in the interior of this deity, deposited there probably to imbibe his supernatural powers, prior to their dispersion as his representatives, (Ellis, vol. ii. Page 220.)³³¹

While only the 22nd item listed in the catalogue, an image from 1860 of ‘Case A’, ‘Idols and Objects of Superstitious Regard from the Islands in the Pacific ocean’ shows the carving positioned centrally alongside a number of other anthropomorphic figures (see Plate 67). A’a had also been depicted at the centre of a plate showing ‘IDOLS Worshipped by the Inhabitants of the South Sea Islands’ (See Plate 31, facing p.141), published opposite the title page of the second volume of Williams Ellis’ (1829) *Polynesian Researches*. While a supreme deity might be expected to be highly valued when given up to missionaries, there is something about the peculiar visual and material qualities of the carving that makes A’a so well suited to prominent display.

³³¹ Catalogue 2: p.7

It is perhaps unsurprising that A'a was among the Polynesian 'idols' selected in 1890 by curators from the BM for long-term loan, a selection that also included most the other anthropomorphic idols that had been displayed in Case A at the LMS museum. In 1908, a number of the same items were requested from the BM for display at the *Orient in London* exhibition. Reluctant to 'expose these precious relics to any danger', Charles Hercules Read offered to supply plaster casts that could be 'coloured to correspond to the originals' (Hooper, 2007: 148). Following the creation of these moulds, casts of A'a were supplied to the Bishop Museum in Hawai'i, the Dominican Museum at Wellington in New Zealand, and possibly also to museums in Chicago and Philadelphia (Hooper, 2007: 148). More recently, a cast was sent to Rurutu, and in 2004 it was being kept in a cabinet alongside sporting trophies at the Mairie at Moera'i, where it was the focus for plans to establish a museum on the island (Hooper, 2007: 149). While the original wooden carving has largely been in London since 1822 (although it was taken to Paris in 1867, 1972 & 2008, New York in 1984, and Norwich in 2006), two and three-dimensional indexical representations of A'a have circulated widely since an image of 'Taaroa Upoo Vahu' featured on the front cover of *Missionary Sketches* in January 1824 (see Plate 68). Arguably, these movements in space have largely been a consequence of the capacity A'a appears to have had to 'move' Europeans in emotional, spiritual, and cognitive ways, whether poets and literary critics, modern artists, or evangelical missionaries. According to Hooper:

Such is the power of this object, at once tranquil and challenging, at once revealing and concealing, that it has inspired, appalled or enchanted all who have come into its presence, and many who have not. It is not easily ignored. Once seen, never forgotten.

(Hooper, 2007: 131)

Anthropology and Idolatry

Anthropologists appear to have been no more immune to the charms of A'a than other Europeans, even if this sometimes posed them somewhat doctrinal problems. Writing in a book on *Primitive Art & Society* (Forge, 1973), Edmund Leach suggested that a fundamental problem was:

how far our western appreciation of works of primitive art is likely to be related to the intentions, either conscious or unconscious, of the original artist or to the responses which that artist's indigenous audience are likely to record.
(Leach, 1973b: 221)

Like one of Strathern's fabled 'Europeans', Leach took it for granted that he should study the significance that 'artefacts have for the people who make them, and thus their interpretations of them' (Strathern, 1990: 37). Adopting a position that has echoes in Quine's (1960) argument for the indeterminacy of translation, Leach even asserted that 'Art is effective or communicative or whatever else it is *only* in terms of the cultural context in which it is observed' (1973b: 223). In the terms used in De Saussure's (1916) *Course in Structural Linguistics*, any particular instance of *parole*, or practice, can only be understood by situating it in relation to *langue*, the system of rules and significant difference in which it attains a meaningful function.

Nevertheless, the fact that 'people of western culture do have aesthetic responses to objects which are entirely alien to their own', remained a problem for Leach (1973b: 221), who suggested that 'we can only judge such an object by treating it as if it were a part of our own culture' (1973b: 223). Leach argued that there must be a boundary to the cultural context outside of which an object ceases to have meaning, posing two important questions:

- (i) If culture 'consists of messages' within the cultural context, how do we distinguish the cultural boundary?
- (ii) If there are such things as cultural boundaries, how do some messages manage to get across the boundaries?

(Leach, 1973b: 223)

Drawing on Nancy Munn's work on the complex and multiple meanings associated with particular elements of Walbiri iconography, Leach suggested that while only a Walbiri might understand the '*whole* complex of ambiguous meanings... it may be that some *bits* of the complex can communicate cross-culturally' (Leach, 1973b: 223). In particular, he suggested that 'messages which refer to some attribute or part of the human animal as such are not culture bound' (Leach, 1973b: 223). Most of Leach's subsequent essay was given over to a structural analysis of ecclesiastical headgear, which built on what he argued was a 'worldwide tendency to find ritual potentialities in the human head considered as a symbolic object' (Leach, 1973b: 227). Leach suggested that the human head is frequently identified with the human phallus, and while he may have relished comparing the attire of the entire Roman Catholic hierarchy to a series of variously coloured and more or less elaborately adorned phalli, he was also suggesting that even elaborate cultural codifications frequently built on 'subliminal signals' (Leach, 1973b: 230), an argument that resonated with psychoanalytical understandings of the unconscious (Leach, 1973b: 227). Leach's hypothesis was that:

when westerners affirm that some completely alien cultural product is a 'work of art' this is a response to the fact that elements in the iconography have touched off animal feelings which have been deeply repressed by taboo... At the root of these complex sensations are the basic animal experiences of (a) sex (b) eating (c) dominance and submission.

(Leach, 1973b: 232)

Leach referred to A'a as having the attributes of an ancestral God-the-Father, which he thought explained the 'simple and easily understood iconographic convention' involving human figures emerging all over his body (Leach, 1973b: 232).

Nevertheless, he asked why this figure 'has always been regarded as an outstanding "work of art"' and 'not just an object from Polynesia' (Leach, 1973b: 232). According to Leach, 'at least part of the answer must lie in the multiple layers of partly overt, partly disguised, expression of phallic ambiguity' (Leach, 1973b: 232). He went on to suggest that A'a not only originally had an erect phallus, but was also marked by a more 'subtle phallic theme' (Leach, 1973b: 232). Leach argued that when viewed from the side, 'its elongated body and dish-shaped face acquires a very markedly phallic appearance' (see Plate 69):

It is surely the ambiguous redundancy of this male sexual message which first catches our attention and makes us aware, in a barely conscious way, that here is something quite out of the ordinary.

(Leach, 1973b: 234)

In contrast to Leach, who interpreted the form of A'a in essentially psychoanalytical terms, Alfred Gell, his onetime student, declared that 'the most striking attribute' of the carving he regarded as the 'finest extant piece of Polynesian sculpture' (Gell, 1998: 137) was:

the way in which the features of the god are represented by little figures which repeat, in miniature, the overall form of the god as a whole. This god sprouts little gods all over its surface: mathematically, it is akin to the type of figure known as a 'fractal', a figure which demonstrates the property of self-similarity at different scales of magnification/minification.

(Gell, 1998: 137)

The physical form taken by A'a, particularly the cavity at its rear which allows it to function as a container, provided Gell with the basis of his discussion of 'fractal

personhood' in *Art and Agency*, his final book (Gell, 1998: 137). The notion was developed from Roy Wagner (1991), according to whom:

A fractal person is never a unit standing in relation to an aggregate, or an aggregate standing in relation to a unit, but always an entity with relationship integrally implied. Perhaps the most concrete illustration of integral relationship comes from the generalised notion of reproduction and genealogy... A genealogy is thus an enchainment of people, as indeed persons would be seen to 'bud' out of one another in a speeded-up cinematic depiction of human life.

(Wagner, 1991: 163)

Gell used the image of A'a to think about enchainment in the same way that Wagner drew on an image of speeded up film.³³² What is most striking about Gell's engagement with A'a, is that unlike Leach, he did not presume that it should be studied for its significance for the people that made it (Strathern, 1990: 37). Gell drew on A'a alongside a number of other artefacts, including Tahitian 'idols' of the type sent by Pomare to London, to create his book as an artefact in its own right. In his engagement with these things, Gell was as interested in discovering his own ideas as in getting 'a closer approximation to' those of either Polynesians or Melanesians (Strathern, 1990: 40). Gell might be said to have interrogated artefacts as sources that manifest the nature of things.

It is perhaps ironic that Gell drew on items that had been sent to the LMS Museum in the process of formulating what he referred to as 'a general theory of idolatry' (Gell, 1998: 96), though he was not unaware of A'a's association with a history of iconoclasm, noting that:

Almost every other Rurutan idol was consigned to the flames by the missionaries, but this one was preserved, initially to drum up subscriptions for

³³² Indeed, A'a can almost be taken as a material expression of the argument that man is born in chains, contrary to the famous assertion with which Rousseau began *The Social Contract*.

the London Missionary Society so that they could afford to destroy other, no doubt equally fine, carvings elsewhere.

(Gell, 1998: 137)

Gell's dismissive, but essentially accurate comments about missionaries were incidental to his argument. Nevertheless, he set out to refute what he called 'a special form of bad faith about "the power of images" in the contemporary Western world', which Freedberg (1989) had argued was the result of a combination of 'the Protestant-Puritan heritage' combined with 'a special form of art-theoretical casuistry' (Gell, 1998: 97). Gell intended to show that idolatry:

emanates, not from stupidity or superstition, but from the same fund of sympathy which allows us to understand the human, non-artefactual, "other" as a copresent being, endowed with awareness, intentions, and passions akin to our own

(Gell, 1998: 96)

Essentially, Gell argued that the attribution of agency to both 'iconic' and 'aniconic' idols depended upon the same form of inference as the attribution of intentional psychology to other humans, a cognitive operation he referred to as abduction (Gell, 1998: 14). Gell linked this to both external conceptions of agency, which attributed intentionality on the basis of an entity's capacity to conform to expected forms of behaviour - the main criterion by which we evaluate the behaviour of other humans - but also to an 'internalist' theory of mind, which he suggested had been shown by psychological studies to be an extremely common characteristic among ordinary human beings (Gell, 1998: 127). One important strand of Gell's project was to develop an anthropology that was less rooted in linguistically derived notions of symbolism and meaning, and more in understandings of human behaviour that came from contemporary work in psychology and cognitive science (Gell and Hirsch, 1999:

17). This position had been taken by Gell's colleague at LSE, Maurice Bloch, during his 1990 Frazer Lecture when he argued that 'the hypotheses of cognitive scientists, however speculative, fundamentally challenge many unexamined anthropological assumptions in a way that should not be ignored' (Bloch, 1991: 184). Bloch proposed that:

it is quite clear that in the past, anthropologists have grossly exaggerated cultural variation, and that the traditional questions of cultural anthropologists concerning very broad areas of knowledge should be rephrased from 'How are these things learned?' to 'How is culturally specific knowledge produced out of universal predispositions?'

(Bloch, 1991: 185)

If examples of human practice, whether artefacts or bodily performances (including verbal ones), are not only comprehensible in terms of a particular bounded cultural context, as Leach had implied, then there is little reason why artefacts from one part of the world should not illuminate features of human life in others. If the system of meanings referred to by De Saussure as *langue* (1916), along with similar notions such as culture or context, are recognized as characteristics of the textual artefacts created by linguists and anthropologists to make manifest the 'nature of things', then *parole*, or the process of human practice and its products, emerges as considerably more indeterminate and provisional. Indeed, linguistic *parole* should be understood not as a series of messages that only make sense when decoded according to a master code, but rather as a series of interconnected and overlapping language games, as proposed by Wittgenstein in his later work (1953). Artefacts are performances, and performances are artefacts that emerge as products, or perhaps

prestations,³³³ from processes of game-like strategic action. Nevertheless, these games do not have rules that have been formulated in advance, but emerge from the rough approximation between *prestation* and counter-*prestation*. This allows the games of human life to have the capacity to range over spaces and times that are not determined in advance. *Prestations* should therefore be understood as much in relation to their effects as the context from which they emerged, and these effects can be surprising and revelatory in equal measure.

This allows one to respond to Leach's first question by positing that culture does not consist primarily of 'messages within a cultural context' (Leach, 1973b: 223), but rather of performances that are created in response to other *prestations*, and stimulate the creation of others in turn. There is nothing in this enchainment of *prestation* and counter-*prestation* that presumes the existence of boundaries. At the same time, boundaries, whether physical or predominantly mental, can be a consequence of particular kinds of performance. Boundaries, such as those that are created around a liminal place during a rite of passage, are generally created not to prevent the movement of things across them, but rather to make these movements visible or perceptible by marking them and channelling them through particular passages - the walls that surrounded ancient cities always had gates built into them, just as the wall built through Jerusalem recently has checkpoints. The question, it seems, is not how things get across boundaries, but rather how boundaries are created to regulate the movement of things (human and nonhuman). The answer to Bloch's rephrased question seems to be that culturally specific knowledge is

³³³ In French, *prestation* can refer to services, payments, but also performances capturing something of the link between artefact & performance, or process and product. The term is the one Mauss uses in *The Gift*, see: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k93922b/f38.image.r=prestation>

produced within the boundaries created by enclosures, whether ceremonial or physical. Nevertheless, it should be clear from the role that certain objects from the LMS collection have played in stimulating both the productions of artists like Henry Moore and Pablo Picasso, as well as the textual productions of William Empson, Edmund Leach and Alfred Gell, is that the boundaries created by brick walls and glass cases at the BM have not been able to regulate the effects these artefacts have had in any predictable way. Indeed, the visibility of A'a at the Museum of Mankind seems to have contributed to Gell's attempt to create something that approached a theology of idolatry, an outcome that would have been barely imaginable by his missionary ancestors.³³⁴

Since the artefacts that emerge from enchainments of *prestation* and counter-*prestation* are not necessarily limited to bounded areas of space or fixed periods in time, they may be encountered by audiences other than those for which they were originally intended. These others can choose, it seems, whether to ignore them, to attempt to suppress them, or else to respond with a counter-presentation. While many objects in the LMS collection have largely been ignored since their arrival in London, and others were destroyed in the places they were encountered, the history/biography of A'a, at least since 1822, suggests that some artefacts are harder to ignore than others. As an artefact that manifests 'the nature of things' (Strathern, 1990: 28), A'a appears to have performed as well in London as he might have in a ceremonial complex in Rurutu. Indeed, it is striking that while Gell responded to A'a by creating a textual artefact that explored the nature of idolatry and personhood, he

³³⁴ In the introduction to his collected essays, Gell stated that he was descended from 'colonial officials, soldiers, and even missionaries and bishops' (Gell, 1999: 20).

used a footnote to show that his contemporaries in Rurutu were intent on using A'a in a symmetrical way to reflect on the nature Christianity. Citing Alain Babadzan, Gell suggested that:

According to the Rurutan elders, there were three gods inside the A'a when it was made, by a Hero named Amaiterai. Amaiterai made the A'a after visiting a city none other than London, present resting-place of the A'a, which he reached in fulfilment of a species of knightly quest, imposed on him in order to win the hand of the adopted daughter of the King of Rurutu, who had been promised to his brother. In London Amaiterai encountered the God of Wisdom (who later was the God of the Christians, brought to Rurutu by missionaries) whose image he replicated in the form of the famous A'a. The gods inside the A'a were three Polynesian gods originating in London: Room-etua-ore, alias Te Atua Metua, alias God the Father; Aura-roiteata, alias Te Atua tamaiti, alias God the Son; and Te atua aiteroa, alias Te Atua Vaura Maita'i, alias God the Holy Spirit. In other words, the A'a is the Tabernacle in which the Trinity arrived on Rurutu, by the agency of a Rurutan hero, long before the missionaries themselves arrived. The A'a is in London, but it is present on Rurutu in the form of Christian belief.

(Gell, 1998: 137)

When one Rurutan, Maurice Lenoir, travelled to London to pay homage to A'a in 1989, he presented the museum with the loin cloth and hat he wore to do so, and this became part of the museum's collection (Oc1989,01.1-2).

Charismatic Objects

In the Chapter 6, I argued that the prominence of Polynesian 'idols' such as A'a had damaged attempts to understand the nature of missionary collecting as a whole in the same way that the celebrity of David Livingstone has damaged efforts to understand the nature of the missionary enterprise more widely (Cox, 2008: 14). I also suggested in Chapter 2 that a great deal of information about the institutional lives of museum objects can be gained from the study of the labels that have been

attached to them, and have used these to develop a sequence of labelling events in the history of the collection (Plate 12, facing p.72), but also to link particular objects to a range of textual documents through the identification numbers inscribed on these labels. Although no such labels are attached to A'a today, this allows me to surmise on the basis of the catalogue description quoted above, that a green label bearing the number 22 must once have been affixed. This has been removed, however, in order to allow A'a to be displayed in the most aesthetically appealing manner. By contrast, it is the least remarkable and least visited objects from the LMS collection that are the bearers of the most important historical clues, such as old catalogue and display labels. In contrast to A'a, an unremarkable egg basket from Guinea at the BM (Af1910;-;443) has no fewer than nine labels or markings still attached to or associated with it. While this provided me with an ideal reference specimen when it came to developing my typology of these labels and markings, it appears to have had little significance in relation to the history of the LMS, and has probably been largely ignored since its arrival in London. While such objects are indispensable when attempting to understand the nature of missionary collecting as an enterprise, it is also clear that their effects on their environment, and on those encountering them have been fairly minimal. They have, in Gell's terms, largely been 'patients' rather than 'agents' (Gell, 1998: 22). Translated from Guinea to London and placed in the LMS museum, the egg basket was unable to continue to function as one, becoming simply a museum object. Its containment and detachment were successful.

Nevertheless, the history of the LMS collection, as outlined in chapters 3-5, have made it clear that other objects, A'a among them, were much less successfully detached and contained. The same things regularly became the focus for human

attention and activity, whether in the LMS museum, at exhibitions, or reproduced in missionary publications. While A'a appears to have been preeminent among them, there were other objects such as Pomare's 'family gods' or the Rarotongan staff god discussed in the previous chapter, which were regularly depicted or else remarked on in textual accounts. While items associated with non-Christian forms of religious practice, and especially idolatry, have a special significance for evangelicals, there nevertheless appear to have been particular characteristics that have allowed certain objects like A'a to capture human attention at points in space and time that were far removed from their origins. One possible measure of the capacity of particular objects to capture human attention is the number of times that they have been referred to in publications, or that their images have been reproduced. A data listing of the objects from the BM, obtained in 2008, suggests that of 479 objects obtained from the LMS collection in 1890 and 1910, only 78 of these had photographs associated with them. These had mostly been taken using colour slide film for publication, so are suggestive of the focus of both curatorial and research interest in the collection over the preceding thirty or so years. It is indicative that 58 of these 78 photographs are of objects that came from Polynesia, and 59 of them are of objects that formed part of the 1890 loan, which itself comprised just over half the number of objects included in the list (241).

Of the 78 objects with photographs, 65 were associated with only one. Of the remainder, a Polynesian god house (LMS.120) and a flute made from human bone (LMS. 145) are associated with two photographs, while the engraved ostrich eggshell referred to in chapter 2 (1910;-;363), and a central African ceremonial female figure (1910;-;441) are each associated with three photographs. There were four

photographs of each of a pair of elaborately carved Manganian (Cook Islands) staff gods (LMS. 42 & 43), a New Zealand adze (LMS. 157) and a Hawaiian fan (LMS. 200). Then there were six photographs associated with another Manganian staff god (LMS. 62) and eight photographs associated with a Hawaiian feathered head (LMS.221). Objects with more than ten associated photographs include a carved wooden figure from Rarotonga with twelve (LMS. 169), A'a (LMS. 19) with fourteen, and a temple figure from Hawai'i (LMS. 223) with eighteen. The predominance of elaborately carved ceremonial items from Polynesia among the most photographed objects from the LMS collection at the BM in 2008 is striking. It suggests that these objects have been particularly able to attract human interest and attention after nearly two centuries in museums in London. It is even more striking that the four most photographed objects from the LMS collection at the BM in 2008 were also the four objects that were placed at the centre of Case A at the Missionary Museum in 1860 (See Plate 67, facing p.248).

The four most photographed objects from the LMS collections at the BM seem to belong a class of things that I have elsewhere referred to as charismatic objects (Wingfield, 2010). The term charisma is taken from Weber, who uses it to 'distinguish the greater or lesser ordinariness of the phenomena in question' (Weber, 1968: 400). Interestingly, Weber introduces this term by suggesting that 'not every stone can serve as a fetish, a source of magical power. Nor does every person have the capacity to achieve the ecstatic states' (Weber, 1968: 400). Echoing Mauss (1990 [1923]: 3), we might ask what force there is in these things which makes their viewers respond to them? It is perhaps significant, given Mauss' discussion of *The Gift* in relation to Pacific notions of *mana* (1990 [1923]: 8-10), that Weber suggested that the

word “charisma” be used as a gloss for the ‘extraordinary powers designated by “mana,” “orenda” and the Iranian “maga” (the term from which our word “magic” is derived)’ (Weber, 1968: 400).

While Weber made these remarks in the context of discussing the naturalistic orientation of ‘the most elementary forms of behaviour motivated by religious or magical factors’, he also recognized that this remained a feature of what he called ‘folk religion’ (Weber, 1968: 400), suggesting elsewhere that ‘the needs of the masses everywhere tend towards magic and idolatry’ (Weber, 1968: 609). While contemporary academic researchers and museum curators might not think of themselves as ‘the masses’, and might resent their publications being regarded as examples of ‘idolatry’, it certainly seems to have been the case that their attention has been disproportionately drawn to some of the most charismatic or extra-ordinary objects from the LMS collection. To say that it is the charisma of these objects that humans respond to, is arguably just another way of re-stating the problem in different terms. If things are extraordinary or even out-of-the-ordinary, what is it that makes them so? According to Weber, there are two different types of charisma. The first ‘is a gift that inheres in an object or person simply by virtue of natural endowment’ (Weber, 1968: 400), and cannot be acquired. Charisma of the other type ‘may be produced artificially in an object or person through some extraordinary means’ (Weber, 1968: 400). Things can seem extra-ordinary for a range of different reasons, and evaluations of rarity and value are undoubtedly connected to charisma as Weber defines it. Nevertheless, charisma, like magic, is a quality that is far easier to recognize than it is to understand or explain.

In attempting to explore the 'magical' and enchanting effects of particular artefacts, Alfred Gell developed the idea that there were technologies of enchantment (Gell, 1992). One way in which he attempted to account for these was through what he called 'the enchantment of technology' - that the techniques involved in the creation of some things are so challenging that the virtuosity required to perform them becomes so unimaginable as to be enchanting. The things in question do not seem like they could possibly have been produced through the simple and routine actions of humans on matter, making them seem peculiarly magical, and according to Gell, cognitive traps. In a sense this is a restatement of Weber's first type of charisma except that it is also an argument about skill, and the impressiveness of those who have achieved unusually high levels of ability, whether in drawing, painting, carving, music or sport. In a way, Gell simply displaces the charisma from the artefact onto its maker through this line of argument. While the four most photographed objects from the LMS collection at the BM are undoubtedly the enchanting products of highly skilled craftspeople, there seem to be additional factors that contribute to their charisma, or extraordinariness.

While Weber suggested that charisma may be produced artificially 'through some extraordinary means', in many instances, the extra-ordinariness of particular artefacts is simply an outcome of the passage of time. Their rarity is increased by the fact of survival, since other similar items have been destroyed since the time of their creation. A similar argument could be made about transmission through space, and it is certainly the case that many objects in the LMS collection became rarer and more valuable as a consequence of being transported across the world. If we regard the enclosure of things in ships and museums as in certain ways paralleled by the

containment of things in ceremonial enclosures to effect their transformation by extraordinary means, then it may be possible to recognize the ship and museum as technologies of enclosure as extraordinary in themselves. While museums attempt to enable things to survive by limiting the physical contact they have with humans, in other contexts such contact can leave physical marks. Repeated handling and acts of care, such as oiling and polishing, can give objects a patina, which at least in Polynesia is recognized as an indicator of *mana*.

In addition, *mana* can also be accumulated by things through their association with charismatic humans, as well as with other charismatic things. It is perhaps a notion of charisma accumulated in this way that is responsible for the interest shown in relatively ordinary things that were associated with extra-ordinary missionary heroes, and which allowed them to be regarded as relics. However, the recognition of these forms of charisma by association is dependent on knowledge of the association, and unlike patina cannot be read from the physical form and material qualities of things. As such, it can be lost if these associations are not regularly repeated, either in spoken or written words. There are a number of relatively ordinary, functional-looking things in the basement at the CWM headquarters whose significance only becomes clear when their association with particular famous missionaries is revealed. While something of an ordinary object's involvement in significant historical events can be inferred from its condition, as well as the very fact of its continued existence, a detailed provenance can make any object more extraordinary, and by extension valuable, whether in the sale-rooms of London, New York and Paris, or in the ceremonial enclosures of the Pacific.

Displayed above the anthropomorphic 'idols' in Case A at the LMS museum were a number of examples of aniconic idols from the Pacific. Among these were Pomare's 'household gods' which provoked such a strong reaction when they arrived in Britain. Nevertheless, there is a degree to which the charisma of these depends upon the regular performance/demonstration of their significance. A great deal of their charisma derived from their association with Pomare, but also one of the most important events in the history of the LMS. Nevertheless, their plain material form meant that they did not always have the same degree of visual impact as other anthropomorphic 'idols'. Indeed, a number of aniconic Polynesian idols, having shed their wrappings and labels presumably after years of repeated handling in missionary contexts, appeared to be plain pieces of wood or stone, and were not even selected for purchase by curators from the BM in 1910. They became part of the collections of A.W. Fuller who subsequently identified them on the basis of descriptions in the 1860 catalogue and the evidence they show of having once been wrapped.³³⁵ While the charisma these undecorated sections of cylindrically carved wood depends on technologies of enclosure, wrappings of sennet, feathers and bark cloth, or else of technologies of inscription, through labels or other sorts of marking, the four most photographed objects from the LMS collection appear to possess their charisma by virtue of natural endowment.

³³⁵ FM: Accession numbers 273032, 274630, 274631, 274632.

273032 has a green label no. 15 attached which was previously covered by another label. This came off in 1924, some time after Fuller had acquired it. It was described in the catalogue as:

Another stone idol, to which this silly legend was attached: that the priest could throw it into the sea, and make it swim back again. Catalogue 2, p.6

Fuller identified 274630, 274631 & 273032 with numbers 56 – 60 in the same catalogue, which have the description: *A SAMOAN GOD, a short round stick; and numerous small variously shaped idols, some decorated with feathers.* Catalogue 2, p.8.

Fuller's account of these items was recorded on FM: Sonaband 129 (June 20, 1958) counter number 118-248 & Sonaband 34 (April 4, 1958) counter number 62 – 99.

Each takes the form of a human body, or at least a human head, physical characteristics that seem to enable them to translate particularly well from one place and time to another. They are human-like nonhumans, and this seems to underlie the responses of those who have encountered them. The evidence provided by the ways in which people in Britain have responded to these human-like charismatic objects over the last two centuries would seem to support Edmund Leach in his suggestion that artefacts which relate to the human body have the greatest capacity to make an impact on people in places and times that are remote from those in which they were created. Even though he struggled to reconcile himself with the implications this had for his understanding of the determining nature of culture context, Leach recognized that ‘messages which refer to some attribute or part of the human animal as such are not culture bound’ (Leach, 1973b: 223), arguing for a ‘worldwide tendency to find ritual potentialities in the human head considered as a symbolic object’ (Leach, 1973b: 227). For Leach, responses to objects of this kind were rooted in ‘subliminal signals’ (Leach, 1973b: 230) and ‘animal feelings which have been deeply repressed by taboo’ (Leach, 1973b: 232), terms that derived from the vocabulary of mid-twentieth century psychoanalysis. In the section that follows, I will attempt to develop this argument in relation to Gell (1999: 17) and Bloch’s (1991: 184) suggestions that recent developments in cognitive science need to be taken more seriously.

Face-to-Face

If one compares the four objects that were placed at the centre of Case A at the LMS museum, and which later became the most photographed items from the LMS collection at the BM, to the other four anthropomorphic carvings placed

alongside them (see Plate 67, facing p. 248),³³⁶ what is most obvious is their elaborate facial features. Each not only has detailed facial features, but appears to actually have an expression. This makes them both visually striking, but also memorable in a way that most other carved pieces of wood are not. Evidence for the extraordinary cognitive capacities of many humans for processing the details of other human faces has been some of the most remarkable to emerge from work in cognitive science over the last half century. Some evidence of this has come from clinical examples in which this capacity is impaired in some way. This condition has come to be clinically described as *prosopagnosia*, a term first used in a 1947 paper by Joachim Bodamer, in which he described the case of a 24 year old patient who had received a bullet wound to the head in September 1944, presumably in connection with the second world war (Bodamer, 1947, Ellis and Florence, 1990). While he retained the ability to make out separate features of a face such as the nose, lips and mouth, he could no longer perceive faces as a whole, recognize whose they were, nor make out their expressions (Ellis and Florence, 1990: 85): ‘all faces appeared equally “sober” and “tasteless” to him’ (Ellis and Florence, 1990: 86). Interestingly this inability to recognize and interpret faces also seems to have extended to animal faces (Ellis and Florence, 1990: 88). While one strand of evidence for the peculiar capacity of humans to recognize and interpret faces comes from clinical instances of pathology, another comes from studies of human infants by developmental psychologists.

A study by R.L. Fantz (1961) suggested that infants as young as a month old would look for longer at a schematic diagram containing the anatomical features of a

³³⁶ BM: Accession numbers Oc;LMS.35, Oc;LMS.36, Oc;LMS.38, Oc;LMS.99

human face when these were arranged into the configuration taken by a human face. A subsequent study suggested that when these diagrams were moved, that newborn infants would visually track those with a facial configuration for longer than those with a jumbled face (Goren et al., 1975). Recently, researchers in Japan have shown that one-month old infants will tend to look for longer at images of actual human faces on a computer monitor than at images of inanimate objects with face-like patterns on them when neither are moving (Sanfuji et al., 2011). Perhaps significant when considering 'idols', they also suggested that the infants demonstrated no marked differences in their responses to images of human faces and images of human-like dolls. Other recent studies using real faces have suggested that human infants may be able to discriminate between their mother's faces and those of other humans within a day of birth (Bushnell, 2001). Even more striking is a suggestion that newborn infants may even be capable of imitating certain facial expressions in adults (Meltzoff and Moore, 1983), a behaviour I have tested personally and found to be accurate. While the interpretation of these experimental results is complex, and one would need to be extremely careful about the forms of intentionality that one 'abducted' from these behaviours, the demonstration of these behaviours in human infants from very shortly after birth seems to suggest that they may have a very specific visual capacity to recognize and respond to human-like faces in their environment, that is not simply a learned outcome that results from exposure to faces following birth.

However one interprets the evidence from studies of infant behaviour, or of pathological cases, what both seem to suggest is that most adult humans have highly

developed cognitive capacities when it comes to both recognizing human-like faces in their visual environment, and processing them for salient information. As long ago as 1872, Charles Darwin noted that the facial expressions of humans and nonhuman animals in particular states of emotional arousal showed a range of commonalities, and suggested that facial expressions might be an evolved, and relatively involuntary human behaviour (Darwin and Murray, 1872).³³⁷ Studies conducted a century later by Paul Ekman, comparing responses to images of facial expressions among Americans and Fore people in Papua New Guinea suggested that they were able to interpret expressions of anger, disgust, happiness and sadness in each others' faces (Ekman, 1973, Ekman and W, 1971). While Ekman's studies supported a great deal of Darwin's suggestions, recent studies have demonstrated variations in the ways in which 'east asians' and 'western caucasians' analyze, but also interpret, a number of more ambiguous facial expressions (Jack et al., 2009). While it seems very likely that the visual and cognitive operations involved in interpreting facial stimuli will be fine-tuned to variations in human practice and expression in different parts of the world, what all these studies do demonstrate is that humans, wherever in the world they come from, are highly skilled at interpreting the faces of others for indications of their emotional states, a cognitive operation Gell referred to as abduction (1998: 14).

Whether or not they are able to interpret the facial expressions of others accurately, humans seem to be predisposed to attempt it, and this can make faces, or even the face-like features of nonhuman entities, visual and cognitive traps of a kind that lends them to deployment as part of what Gell called 'technologies of enchantment' (Gell, 1992). While the human body may be a fairly universal

³³⁷ See discussion of Darwin's book in Bruce (1998).

reference point that is drawn on in different ways in different societies (Douglas, 1970), as the basis of our embodied existence it has an anatomy that shapes, selects and directs our attention to particular features of the surrounding environment that are most pertinent to our existence, without needing conscious direction. By virtue of being humans with human bodies, it seems that most of us cannot avoid noticing and paying attention to features of the surrounding environment with particular visual characteristics such as the features of a human face, and possibly also lateral symmetry (Muir et al., 1994, Perreault et al., 2011, Pornstein and Krinsky, 1985, Slaughter et al., 2002). It was this tendency to be attracted to ‘uncommon or brightly coloured objects, or by any individual peculiarities in familiar things which presented themselves’ which Henry Balfour suggested predated the deliberate imitation of these features by humans in his book on *The Evolution of Decorative Art* (1893: 2). This obviously echoes Weber’s suggestion that the ‘most elementary forms of behaviour motivated by religious or magical factors’ are oriented towards things in which charisma inheres ‘by virtue of natural endowment’ (Weber, 1968: 400).

While I am sceptical about whether it is possible to construct an entire ‘theory of religion’ around such human predispositions (eg. Guthrie, 1993),³³⁸ these observations are extremely suggestive when trying to account for the way in which the four wooden carvings from the Pacific with the most elaborate and distinctive facial features have elicited a much greater degree of response in Europe than any other objects from the LMS collection. Their capacity to attract and retain human attention, but also to elicit a response, may have a great deal to do with the distinctive facial features of these figures, in addition to their human-like bodies. The

³³⁸ See Bloch (2008) for an account of what makes these arguments of this kind about ‘religion’ in general problematic.

bared teeth and large eyes of both Hawaiian figures (Oc;LMS.221 & Oc;LMS.223) can be interpreted as indicators of aggression without any cosmological or theological knowledge about what this may be associated with. By contrast, the Rarotongan figure (Oc;LMS.169) is suggestive of a more passive attentiveness. It is the eyes in this case that make it easy to regard this carved piece of wood as a being that is motivated by forms of intentionality that resemble those of humans. When confronted by a face with eyes, it seems as if we cannot help but experience a sense of being looked at, even if we think we know that it is us who are doing the looking.³³⁹

As well as their facial characteristics, the impact of the most charismatic of objects from the LMS collection also seems to be related to effects of scale. All four are too large to be held and manipulated in one hand, approximating the scale of human bodies, and this may also make it easier to respond to them as if they had human rather than wooden bodies. Nevertheless, it is also striking that in terms of the proportions of each of these items, they do not simply reflect the physical proportions taken by most human bodies. In each case, their heads and eyes are larger than they would be in a human body, their limbs are shorter, and they involve distortions of anatomical features, such as the appendage of miniature human figures in the case of A'a and the Rarotongan figure (Oc;LMS.169), the elongated eyes and large number of teeth on the Hawaiian feathered head (Oc;LMS.221), or the enormous eyes and twisted mouth of the Hawaiian wooden figure (Oc;LMS.223). Some of these exaggerations may reflect the cognitive salience of different parts of the human body, and of the face in particular, a feature that is reflected in the visual characteristics of drawings of humans by young children (Stetsenko, 1995). Nevertheless, there is

³³⁹ See Gell's discussion of Darshan in *Art and Agency* (Gell, 1998: 116-121), a discussion that draws on Diana Eck's exploration of the practice (Eck, 1985).

something about the complex ambiguity of these carvings, which are at the same time like humans and not like humans, which makes them both striking and memorable.³⁴⁰ It was presumably the many types of ambiguity expressed in the carving of A'a that made it so appealing to William Empson.

'Betwixt and Between'

In his book *The Lives of Indian Images*, Richard H. Davis (1997) has explored the ways in which Indian images have been relocated and responded to in different parts of the world. Drawing on Igor Kopytoff's (1986) proposal for a 'cultural biography of things,' Davis has traced the lives of a number of different Indian religious figures, or *murti*. Davis drew on literary reader-response theory (Fish, 1980, 1989) to suggest that responses to these images were highly conditioned by their framing in either museums or temples (1997: 9), and that these were very different modes of responding that could be understood as originating in different 'communities of response'. He argued that responses are cultural forms, 'learned within particular social settings' (Davis, 1997: 8), and that art-historically informed responses within museum spaces may 'dramatically alter' the significance of an image for new audiences (Davis, 1997: 9). This theoretical framework appears to fundamentally limit the potential for Indian images to exert forms of agency in their own right, locating the nature of human responses to them in 'social' and 'cultural' forms, rather than in embodied encounters.

³⁴⁰ Pascal Boyer (1996) has argued that what makes anthropomorphism so widespread is that the counter-intuitive way in which it deviates from intuitive ontological principles lends it a particular salience and inferential potential.

I have suggested above that human responses should not be understood as coded messages whose meaning is determined by a determining cultural context, but rather as forming part of unbounded enchainments of roughly approximate performances and counter-performances. At the same time, however, I have recognized that one function of these can be to create boundaries that regulate the forms of the performances that take place within particular spaces, and these boundaries make particular forms of transformation both possible and visible. A Hindu temple would be a classic example. As Gell (1998: 136) has pointed out, these provide Gods with a body in which they can be contained, but as containers also function to exclude the world outside. Hindu temples are primarily places in which things are transacted with Gods, whether in the form of offerings of food and drink, acts of care, or even the exchange of gazes (1998: 117). These are at once exchanges, transactions, performances and technical procedures, the intention of which is to transform the beings who enter these enclosures and initiate these transactions. While Davis is right to suggest that the response of those who encounter a *murti* is framed by the temples in which these encounters take place, he is wrong to suggest that this framing determines the nature of these responses. In addition, it is not at all clear, to me at least, that the spaces enclosed within museum buildings are altogether unlike the enclosures contained by Indian temples, or for that matter Polynesian *marae*.

In her book *Civilizing Rituals*, Carol Duncan has drawn extensively on the work of Victor Turner to think about museum visiting as a particular kind of ceremonial practice (1995). Turner (1982b) had argued that the liminal spaces Van Gennep (1909) showed were situated at the centre of rites of passage had

developed in industrial societies into what he has called *liminoid* spaces. In contrast to temporarily demarcated spaces used in rites of passage, *liminoid* spaces are characterized as occupying a permanent location, such as a theatre, where participation is typically voluntary rather than compulsory. This works relatively well when considered in relation to theatre and performance, the direction in which a great deal of Turner's own research developed (1982a). However, if one accepts that Turner's *liminoid* spaces are little different from Foucault's *heterotopias*, then it becomes clear that participation in industrial societies, by prisoners, inmates and even students of a certain age is not always optional. At the same time, Turner's own work describes African rituals of healing that are themselves voluntary (Turner, 1967b: 301). While museums and theatres occupy a relatively permanent demarcation as 'other' places, Bennett's (1995) work on the wider exhibitionary complex has demonstrated the degree to which these operate alongside the temporary spaces demarcated for world's fairs and circuses. While the distinction drawn between the permanent and voluntary *liminoid* spaces of modernity, and temporary and compulsory liminal spaces of tribal life may be one that dissolves under scrutiny, like many attempts to define modernity, the insight that these places have similar functions is an important one.

By concentrating on art museums, and like Bennett (1995: 17) on a narrative of development 'from princely gallery to the public art museum', Duncan (1995: 21) has focussed on institutional forms that appear distinctive to modernity.

Nevertheless, Foucault (1986: 24) suggested that 'there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias', and though public museums have been associated with the development of modernity, in their essential function

of enclosing space they are little different to the liminal spaces created by humans throughout history. What may be particular about modern museums, however, is that they are containers that are linked to much longer networks than at previous periods in history.³⁴¹ Nevertheless, as containers that exclude the world outside, museums as ceremonial other places presumably fulfil very similar functions to the liminal spaces created as part of rites of passage in other parts of the world. According to Turner, liminal spaces, the 'betwixt and between' of rites of passage, can be characterized by structural simplicity, in the sense that social identities are collapsed by them, but cultural complexity in the sense that they can involve complex and ambiguous imagery (Turner, 1967a: 102). According to Turner (1967a: 102), this relates to one of the key operations that takes place during the liminal phase of a rite of passage: the communication of *sacra* to initiates. Following Jane Harrison (1903: 144-160), Turner (1967a: 102) suggested that *sacra* are generally communicated in three forms: exhibitions or "what is shown", actions or "what is done" and instructions or "what is said". While all three of these forms can be found in museums, as liminal spaces they most clearly fulfil the exhibitionary function.

While Carol Duncan has discussed the ways in which art galleries function as ritual spaces that shape and form citizens through their participation in civic rituals (1995: 13), she has given less attention to the particular characteristics of the artefacts that are displayed, and the ways in which these are shaped by the ceremonial functions of museums. Turner suggested that "exhibitions" during rites of passage might include:

³⁴¹ In his notes for a general theory on The Capsule and the Network, Lieven de Caeter (2004) has noted a correlation between the growth of networks and the degree of capsularization.

evocatory instruments or sacred articles, such as relics of deities, heroes or ancestors, aboriginal churingas, sacred drums or other musical instruments, the contents of Amerindian medicine bundles, and the fan, cist and tympanium of Greek and Near Eastern mystery cults.... Other sacra include masks, images, figurines, and effigies; the pottery emblems (*mbusa*) of the Bemba would belong to this class.

(Turner, 1967a: 102-103)

The fact that many of these things were exactly the kind of things to which most attention was directed in the LMS museum is extremely suggestive. Turner argued that many sacred articles have a formal simplicity, yet are interpreted in extremely complex ways (Turner, 1967a: 103), and it may be that the aniconic 'idols' from Polynesia functioned in this way.³⁴² However, he also noted that many of these objects, such as Bemba *mbusa* discussed by Richards (1956: 211), frequently involved figures with exaggerated or disproportionate features (Turner, 1967a: 103).

This is clearly a feature of all of the most photographed and charismatic objects in the LMS collection, which although having the form of human bodies, have heads that are disproportionately large, and in the case of the Hawaiian figures, extremely large eyes and mouths. Turner (1967a: 105) suggested that it is the exaggerated or diminished features of ritual articles that allow them to become 'objects of reflection', and according to him: 'Monsters startle neophytes into thinking about objects, persons, relationships, and features of their environment they have hitherto taken for granted' (Turner, 1967a: 105). It is quite clear that this is the function fulfilled by A'a during the twentieth century, when anthropologists, artists and poets were all startled into thinking about 'objects, persons, relationships, and features of their environment they have hitherto taken for granted'. In a sense, the supreme skill of the person who made A'a lay not in creating an object that encoded specific messages that related to

³⁴² For a discussion of these, see Gell (1998: 109-115).

a particular cultural context, but rather in creating something that would be 'good to think' (Lévi-Strauss, 1963: 89), retaining a capacity to surprise and become a source of revelation, whether in Rurutu or Bloomsbury.

Turner suggested that liminality may partly be described as a 'stage of reflection' (Turner, 1967a: 105), that 'breaks... the cake of custom, and enfranchises speculation', providing a certain freedom to 'juggle with the factors of existence' (Turner, 1967a: 106). The peculiarities of A'a's form, an exaggerated human body with miniature human forms emerging from its body and forming anatomical features such as eyes, ears, nose and mouth, combined with what Leach called a 'subtle phallic theme' (1973b: 232), generate a sense extra-ordinariness that has allowed it to emerge as a pre-eminent 'object', ideally suited for exhibition and contemplation. Museums, as institutions of exhibition, may enact *Civilizing Rituals* (Duncan, 1995), and contribute to the formation of model citizens through regulation of human bodies (Bennett, 1995), but they are also places of inspiration and reflection, where contemplation may be prompted by extra-ordinary objects. Like the things they contain, museums are 'artefacts of history', created to 'manifest' 'the nature of things' (Strathern, 1990: 28), to 'embody history' and to 'evoke past and future simultaneously' while containing their 'own prior context' (Strathern, 1990: 24-25). They have the capacity to surprise in ways that are not determined by the contexts of their creation, and this capacity is enhanced when they contain charismatic objects that are themselves capable of communicating revelation.

The Exchange of Grace

When LMS missionaries such as John Williams travelled to other parts of the world as *Messengers of Grace* (Gunson, 1978), they were intent on communicating a revelation about the nature of god-given grace or *charis*. They believed that the people amongst whom they settled had no conception of this. Nevertheless, by suggesting an equivalence between what he called “charisma” and the terms “mana”, “orenda” and “maga”, Max Weber (1968: 400) has suggested that this was not the case. While he understood the earliest religions to have been oriented around charismatic objects, he also recognized that many religions of revelation had emerged in their early stages around human figures who exerted charismatic leadership (Weber, 1947). Weber proposed that within the two types of charisma he described, ‘a gift that inheres in an object or person simply by virtue of natural endowment’, and ‘charisma that is produced artificially in an object or person through some extraordinary means...all forms of the doctrine or religious grace, from that of *gratia infusa* to the most rigorous tenet of salvation by good works’, were ‘already present *in nuce*’ (Weber, 1968: 400).

Gregory Bateson began an essay originally published immediately after Leach’s (1973b) paper in the volume *Primitive Art and Society* (Forge, 1973), by stating that ‘Aldous Huxley used to say that the central problem for humanity is the quest for grace’ (Bateson, 1973: 235). Bateson suggested that while Huxley felt that he was using the term in the sense it was used in the New Testament, he nevertheless understood it to mean that ‘man has lost the “grace” which animals still have’ uncorrupted by deceit, purpose and self-consciousness. Bateson suggested that art could be understood in relation to this quest for grace, which he understood

as a problem of integration of the 'conscious' and 'unconscious' mind: 'For the attainment of grace, the reasons of the heart must be integrated with the reasons of the reason' (Bateson, 1973: 235). In response to Leach's question about whether it is possible for the art of one culture to have significance for critics from another, Bateson suggested that:

My answer would be that, if art is somehow expressive of something like grace or psychic integration, then the *success* of this expression might well be recognizable across cultural barriers. The physical grace of cats is profoundly different from the physical grace of horses, and yet a man who has the physical grace of neither can evaluate that of both.

(Bateson, 1973: 235-236)

If Bateson is right, then the quality of grace, Weber's sense of a 'god-given' gift that inheres in things, is a question of their integration, and is a arises from form, configuration and relation, rather than possession.

It appears to have been the case that the Tahitians, among whom the earliest LMS *messengers of grace* settled, were particularly interested in a quality they referred to as *mana*. According to Stephen Hooper, *mana* was a term which in its widest sense meant:

efficacy of divine origin, an ability to bring about effects which goes beyond normal human agency. It is not so much a mystical abstract power which people possess, but rather an efficacy manifested in specific outcomes such as fertility, health or success. It is the means by which divinity manifests its presence in the world through particular persons and things.

(Hooper, 2006: 37)

It is perhaps unsurprising then, that when European missionaries, with their ships, firearms and clothes, which could easily be interpreted as manifestations of *mana*, offered to provide access to an unlimited supply of it, that many Polynesians responded enthusiastically. Divesting themselves of the carved wooden containers in which divine potency had until then been manifested, they set about enthusiastically constructing churches and chapels as larger containers, in which they themselves

could be contained. Within these, they offered themselves as living vessels for this god-given gift.

At the same time, the missionaries implored them to hand over their 'idols', their vessels of *mana*. While some were destroyed, a large number were taken to London, where some became successful messengers of a different sort of grace. The way in which modernists in Europe drew on artefacts from other parts of the world has sometimes been narrated in terms of appropriation and projection (Torgovnick, 1990). Bateson (1973: 235), it seems, can be read as suggesting that there may have been a quality of grace, integration, or what I have called charisma, in certain things that demanded a response from those that encountered them in Europe. In the first instance these were contributions that supported the missionary cause, but following the transfer of the LMS' most charismatic objects to the BM, these *prestations* increasingly took the form of two and three dimensional counter-*prestations*. At the turn of the nineteenth century, charismatic objects were understood by Europeans such as Weber and Balfour as belonging to the origins of civilization. Nevertheless, by the 1930s, and particularly as a result of the mass destruction of the first world war, the ideals of civilization had been tarnished, and the same objects were increasingly seen as offering an alternative that was more graceful, or psychologically integrated in Bateson's terms.

Grace, *mana*, or charisma is a god-like quality, that is suggestive of god-given gifts. It is something that humans seem able to recognize and respond to without necessarily understanding its source or its function. Converts to Christianity in different parts of the world must have responded to something they identified as 'god-like' in the teachings and examples of particularly charismatic missionaries. At the

same time, some of the artefacts they sent back to Europe conveyed similar ‘god-like’ characteristics. Responding to these has resulted in the development of new forms of ceremonial practice in Europe. While people in other parts of the world have built churches and learnt to decorate them with representative images using techniques of proportion and perspective, a process described as the ‘graphicalisation of meaning’ (O’Hanlon, 1995), European artists have learnt to create charismatic objects with distorted features. While a number of museums have been built to house the objects that missionaries and others brought to Europe, a much larger number have subsequently been built to house, but crucially also to display the work of modern artists such as Moore and Picasso. Their contact with the ceremonial objects, or *sacra*, of other societies enabled them to create work with exaggerations and distortions in form that have become the focus for reflection and contemplation in art galleries around the world. One example of an image that is distorted in this way is *The Surrealist map of the world*, originally published in a special issue of the Belgian surrealist magazine *Variétés* in 1929 (p.183 – See Plate 70, facing p.285).³⁴³

One of the most striking things about this map is that it has the Pacific ocean at its centre, with Europe and north America shrunk to insignificant positions at the peripheries. Although created as a provocative tool of contemplation about the world and its relations, it surely speaks of the strength of influence that charismatic objects of the kind collected by LMS missionaries had on surrealists, especially since by this date many Pacific islanders were living lives of conventional Christian morality. Just as the Surrealist map of the world emphasizes the areas of most interest to surrealists, so the numbers of photographs of particular objects in the LMS collection

³⁴³ See: <http://bigthink.com/ideas/21308>

at the BM have been used to indicate the objects that have been of most interest over recent decades. In a similar way, the catalogues and depictions of the LMS Museum, as well as illustrations in LMS publications can be analyzed to show that Pacific idols were a major focus of missionary attention throughout the middle part of the nineteenth century. In each case, over a period approaching two centuries, attention has focused on anthropomorphic carvings from the Pacific. This is no less true for recent academic publications that relate to the LMS museum, and this focus is no less distorting in the way that it represents missionary activity and collecting as a whole.³⁴⁴

The iconoclastic rhetoric associated with the missionary enterprise, should perhaps be understood as a powerful emotional and destructive response which recognizes, but at the same time resents, the power that inheres in particularly charismatic things. Nevertheless, a peculiar symmetry emerges when the history of the most charismatic objects in the LMS collection is considered. During the nineteenth century they were taken to Europe during an overseas iconoclastic campaign that involved converting non-European peoples to the ideals of Christianity and Civilization. During the twentieth century they became involved in a similar iconoclastic campaign in Europe, in which ideals, such as those associated with the notion of Civilization, became the focus of a further wave of iconoclastic attacks. What is even more ironic is that modernist iconoclasts were able to draw inspiration from the survivors of their predecessors attacks, converting 'idols' which had represented civilization's negative mirror image into ideals to be emulated. Rather than seeing objects from the LMS collection as converted to modernism, we might

³⁴⁴ It is useful here to return to Latour's distinction between the oligopticon and the panorama, as a reminder of the distortions that creep into presentations of the world that are performed for a particular purpose, with a particular audience in mind.

rather suggest that the power of certain objects to 'move' allowed them to become agents that were ultimately able to 'convert' civilization's discontents (Freud, 1930) to venerating them. The glass cases at the LMS museum, and later the BM seem to have been inadequate containers for at least some of their captives. In the case of A'a at least, the iconoclast's hammer appears to have struck sideways (Latour, 2010: 70).

Conclusion

To this day, no decision of church councils, differentiating the "worship" of God from the "adoration" of the icons of saints, and defining the icons as merely a devotional means, has succeeded in deterring a south European peasant from spitting in front of the statue of a saint when he holds it responsible for withholding a favor even though the customary procedures were performed.
(Weber, 1968: 400)

If we consider Weber's image of a European peasant spitting in front of a statue of a saint, we can detect something of what Mauss (1990 [1923]: 18) called 'the ancient morality of the gift'. The saint failed to reciprocate the peasant's *prestation*, has refused to accept his gift and therefore to reciprocate it. At the same time, this image is suggestive of Gell's (1998: 14-16) discussion of the cognitive operation of abduction, since the peasant can abduct the saint's intention from the fact that he has neglected to act. Nevertheless, these forms of acting and thinking are by no means limited to southern European peasants. At the heart of the British Museum there are gods, and there are relics in the basement of the London Missionary Society.

While the majority of objects from the collection of the LMS museum were transferred to public or private collections during the twentieth century, this did not mark the end of their 'biographies' or prevent them from continuing to 'move'. Some,

like A'a at the BM, have been exhibited in museum galleries, loaned for temporary exhibitions, and visited by researchers. They have also continued to circulate in the form of images, catalogues listings and even plaster casts. Most recently, large numbers of museum objects have been made available globally through online access to museum databases, which have a great deal in common with the earlier printed catalogues of the LMS museum. There are many continuities between the 'lives' of objects at the LMS museum during the nineteenth century and in public museums during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While I suggested in Chapter 5 that transfers of objects from missionary collections were paralleled by processes of professionalization which saw anthropologists emerge as experts on the non-western world, I do not intend to suggest that the transfer of objects out of missionary hands marked their secularization in any simple or straightforward way.

Among those writing at the time these processes were unfolding, J.G. Frazer (1890) suggested that religion be thought of as forming part of a world-historical developmental scheme, preceded by magic and superseded by science, each understood as ways of understanding and explaining the world. Similarly, Emile Durkheim (1995 [1912]) argued for a universal and radical distinction between the sacred and the profane as the basis of religion. It may have suited Frazer and Durkheim to regard the world in ways that emphasised the distinctiveness of religion and religious practices, but I intend to resist the suggestion that the arrival of objects in public museums marked their secularization.³⁴⁵

In his *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, Ludwig Wittgenstein remarked on the narrowness of Frazer's conception of spiritual life, suggesting that he could not

³⁴⁵ For a similar argument, see Bouquet (2005).

'imagine a priest who is not basically an English parson of our times with all his stupidity and feebleness' (Wittgenstein, 1979: 5e). He even suggested that 'Frazer is much more savage than most of his savages, for these savages will not be so far removed from any understanding of spiritual matters as an Englishman of the twentieth century' (Wittgenstein, 1979: 8e). As someone who was baptised a Catholic in Vienna, but whose ancestors were largely Jewish, Wittgenstein clearly had a different perspective on the nature of religion to Frazer, who was brought up in the Free Church of Scotland. Wittgenstein felt able to understand the range of ritual practices described by Frazer emotionally, intuitively and we might add cognitively. In response to Frazer's work, he suggested that man might be thought of as a ceremonial animal.

This insight has been taken up by Wendy James who used the phrase as the title of her recent portrait of anthropology (James, 2004). While Wittgenstein's brief comments suggested that ritual or ceremonial actions might be thought of apart from, or in addition to, what he called 'animal activities' such as taking food (Wittgenstein, 1979: 7e), James has suggested that ritual, symbol and ceremony are 'built in to human action' (James, 2004: 7). Rather than treating the 'technical' and the 'ritual' as distinct classes, James has argued that 'they participate in one another in different degrees'. She has suggested that 'shades of ceremonial colouring' can be found in a very wide range of human practices (2004: 7), and that to separate out a 'religious' domain would 'stultify our comparative insights into the quality of human life' (James, 2004: 300). It is with an eye to these comparative insights that I have conducted this research, looking for the ceremonial as well as the technical in all aspects of life.

While the sacred and the secular are undoubtedly powerful categories that have played a significant role in the development of notions of modernity, they nevertheless form part of a project of purification. Like most processes of purification, these have ultimately been unsuccessful (Douglas, 1966), but they have been accompanied by a 'the proliferation of hybrids' (Latour, 1993 [1991]). At the very moment of their definition, the categories of the sacred and the secular were locked in an embrace that led to the generation of new forms of sacred-secularity and secular-sacredness. It is these hybrid offspring, and in particular the movement of things into the sacred-secularity of the LMS museum, and from there into the secular-sacredness of public ethnographic museums, with which the preceding chapters have been concerned.

I have suggested that the museum and the exhibition spaces in which the LMS collection has been displayed and kept should be understood as 'other' places, or *heterotopias* (Foucault, 1986), locations in which human activities acquire a significant 'ceremonial colouring'. The entry of things into museum collections has been discussed in terms of Van Gennep's (1909) analysis of rites of passage, while the practices of confinement and inscription that make them museum objects have been considered in relation to Foucault's notion of a 'carcerial archipelago' (Foucault, 1991 [1975]: 297). These are practices that blend the technical and the ceremonial to create 'objects' for a particular kind of human attention. Similarly, processions of Polynesian idols around churches take on a ceremonial colouring that is hard to escape.

Nevertheless, towards the beginning of this thesis, I noted that Mauss declared one of the central questions of his *Essai sur le don* to be 'What force is there in the

thing one gives, which makes its recipient reciprocate?'.³⁴⁶ In my discussions of A'a during this final chapter, I hope to have suggested that the force that inheres in a thing demands a response not only to the giver, but also to the thing itself. It is an ineffable quality that has been known by many different names: *mana*, grace, charisma, enchantment, and even integration. It is a god-like - what Hooper has called 'efficacy of divine origin' - perhaps even god-given. It is in things that appear to exceed the material conditions of their own creation. It includes the element of surprise associated with inspiration and revelation. It is the quality that we try to grasp when we refer to soul, mind or *geist*. Mauss appears to have recognized something of this in Tamati Ranaipiri's remarks about the *hau* of the gift (1990 [1923]: 11). The *hau* may not be the spirit of the gift, in the sense of a disembodied soul (Latin *anima*), and may not even be the wind that blows (Mauss, 1990 [1923]: 11). However, it does seem to be connected to the breath (Latin *spiritus*, Hebrew *ruach*). In many ways, this force is the self-propagating principle of life itself, 'the endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful' in which Darwin could see a grandeur. We may be surprised when we encounter the life principle in artefacts made by humans, but perhaps we should not really be. After all, technical processes that lead to the production, or perhaps *prestation*, of things necessarily involve investing our life in them. It is surely this investment of life into things that we respond to when we encounter charismatic artefacts or events.

When Alfred Gell called the conclusion to *Art and Agency*, 'The Extended Mind', and when Gregory Bateson called his collected essays *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, neither I believe were using metaphors simply for rhetorical effect. Rather, they were

³⁴⁶ See p. 16

responding to encounters and exchanges with Melanesians, and explanations and manifestations of the nature of things that they could not simply objectify and dismiss as relevant only in a particular cultural context. An example of this sort of exchange is described in *Naven* (1958 [1936]), where Bateson describes being pumped for 'information about the nature of the universe' (Bateson, 1958 [1936]: 231), while simultaneously trying to learn things from his informants among the latmul. Bateson was told in secret confidence that all 'men, pigs, trees, grass - all the objects of the world - are only patterns of waves'. When he demonstrated how to develop photographic plates in liquid, his informant was impressed to witness a demonstration of this truth (Bateson, 1958 [1936]: 231). While there is a degree to which Bateson attempted to understand the *Naven* performance in terms of its (multiple) cultural contexts, it is also clear from what he wrote that his own ways of thinking and of understanding 'the nature of the universe' had themselves been transformed by his encounters in significant ways. While his informants re-phrased what he told them about the astronomical relationships between the earth and the sun in latmul terms (Bateson, 1958 [1936]: 231), arguably his notion of *schismogenesis* is a rephrasing in anthropological terms of what he was told about 'patterns of waves'.

The title of this thesis is not a metaphor. Objects do move, and have moved. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that most thought and language necessarily consists of metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). By necessity we redeploy the things we have to make and make sense of new ones. The title of this thesis does contain many types of ambiguity. Not least of these is what William Empson called

the fifth type of metaphor: when the author discovers his idea in the act of writing. I only hope the product of this process bears some signs of the life I have invested into it.

Epilogue

In November 2009, exactly 170 years after John Williams was killed, seventeen of his descendants gathered alongside the descendants of those responsible for his death on the beach at Erromanga to participate in a reconciliation ceremony. The scene of Williams' death was reenacted, and the islanders expressed contrition for the actions of their ancestors, requesting forgiveness from the Williams family. As part of the ceremony, a young girl was presented to them in return for the life that had been taken, and the family agreed to take responsibility for her education. Charles Milner-Williams, the great-great-grandson of John Williams, stated that while he hadn't known what to expect, he had 'come out of it, in a curious way with my faith restored and refreshed. The feelings today, the contrition we've seen today have really moved me far more than ever I thought I could possibly have moved'.³⁴⁷ The ceremony was an artefact, a performance staged in an experimental manner. It was hoped by many islanders that it would help to overcome their sense that the island is still negatively affected by the events that took place a hundred and seventy years ago. In Mauss' terms, the event was a *prestation*, an offering presented by one group of people to another in repayment of a perceived debt. While the Christian Erromangans may have felt embarrassed by their ancestors' notorious act of cannibalism, the Williams family may also have been embarrassed at their ancestor's overzealous acts of evangelism. The ceremony could be decoded in terms of familiar anthropological themes such as kinship, ritual and exchange. However, it is perhaps significant that it was triggered by a donation of six objects to the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. They were given by Michael

³⁴⁷ 'Island holds reconciliation over cannibalism' by Briony Leyland, 7 December 2009: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/hampshire/8398126.stm>

Williams, but had originally been collected in the Pacific by his ancestor John Williams nearly two centuries ago (Mayer, 2009).³⁴⁸

This event highlights the potential for things to become a conduit through which past events, and their consequences in the present, are renegotiated by subsequent generations. Despite being separated by many generations from John Williams' death at Erromanga, and by a significant geographical distance, the ongoing possession of historical artefacts enabled the descendants of John Williams to retain a sense of connection with people in the Pacific. In his essay on *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss (1990 [1923]) asked 'What force is there in the thing one gives, which makes its recipient reciprocate?', and I have suggested that the power to move, expressed in terms of charisma, is invested in some objects more than others. Nevertheless, the return of gifts depends on their recipients recognizing this power, and the sense of obligation it places them under. While contemporary Erromangans appear to recognize their Christianity as a gift, it is not clear that many Britons, either in the past or the present, have recognized what they received in return. Museums have largely been regarded as 'other' places, out of time, and their contents as 'matter out of place'. By exploring the ways in which the objects of the London Missionary Society have moved, I have attempted to locate these things in relation to the times and places in which they have existed over the last two centuries. As a counter-*prestation*, this thesis is a way of responding to gifts I have received from others. I can only hope that as an attempt to 'make manifest' 'the nature of things' (Strathern, 1990: 28), it might contribute to reshaping the context from which it has arisen.

³⁴⁸ A New Caledonian club, a Fijian club, a Maori flute, a fish hook, a ceremonial whisk, and a shell. MOA object numbers: 2670/1-6.

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References to manuscript and archival sources, as well as to LMS publications are given in abbreviated form in footnotes. References to published and unpublished sources, as well as to unpublished papers and theses are given using in-text citations.

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| | |
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| BM | British Museum |
| CMS | Church Missionary Society archives at University of Birmingham |
| CWM | Council for World Mission archives at SOAS |
| CUL | Cambridge University Library |
| FM | Field Museum, Chicago |
| HM | Horniman Museum |
| MCA | Mansfield College archives |
| PRM | Pitt Rivers Museum records |
| SAF | Saffron Walden Museum records |
| V&A | Victoria & Albert Museum |
| WCA | Westminster College archives |

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