

This photo is only 260 dpi – is there any chance of a higher resolution one?



Figure 3. A rubber and steel-cable bracelet made by Erna Lilje in 2005 (artist's collection, photograph by Michael Myers).

dye. On the other hand, store bought yellow is not used, because turmeric is easy to grow and make into dye. By asking skirt makers to comment on pictures of skirts from museum collections, I was able to learn more about the level of expertise required for specific aspects of production. This was of notable interest in relation to the types of knotting techniques used to secure fibres to the waistband.

The particularities of the fibres, dyes and decoration are indicative of diverse social networks and relationships, in which I include myself. Museum research and fieldwork has shown me the continuing ability of museum objects collected in the past to catalyze relationships in the present.

My interest in museums has its origins in my art practice. Initially, I addressed the museum 'frame', imitating the visual language used in museum display to produce the effect of authority: display cases, fake nomenclature, un-authored texts, labels, the grid layout, the use of the series or groups of objects. Now I find that it is the close study of production techniques that feeds into my art practice when I am creating armbands or wristbands woven from rubber (Figure 3). Conversations with skirt makers during fieldwork in Papua New Guinea have made multiple connections apparent: between myself, museums and both contemporary and past makers.



Figure 2. A shield made from wood, lead, chalk and cord, given by A. W. Franks in 1893, from Vaiala River (oc+6975, height 32 inches).

12 'Expressions of kindly feeling'

The London Missionary Society collections from the Papuan Gulf

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Arriving in the Torres Straits in 1871, the London Missionary Society (LMS) commenced their attempts to convert communities along the south coast of what is now Papua New Guinea. Building upon their initial efforts in Tahiti (1797), their work in Papua was connected by belief, letter and the

flow of objects to their efforts in Africa, China, India and the West Indies. The LMS played a significant role in opening up Papua, a *terra incognita* for Europeans annexed by the British in 1884. Material culture was integral to engagements between LMS missionaries and local people, and influenced each party's

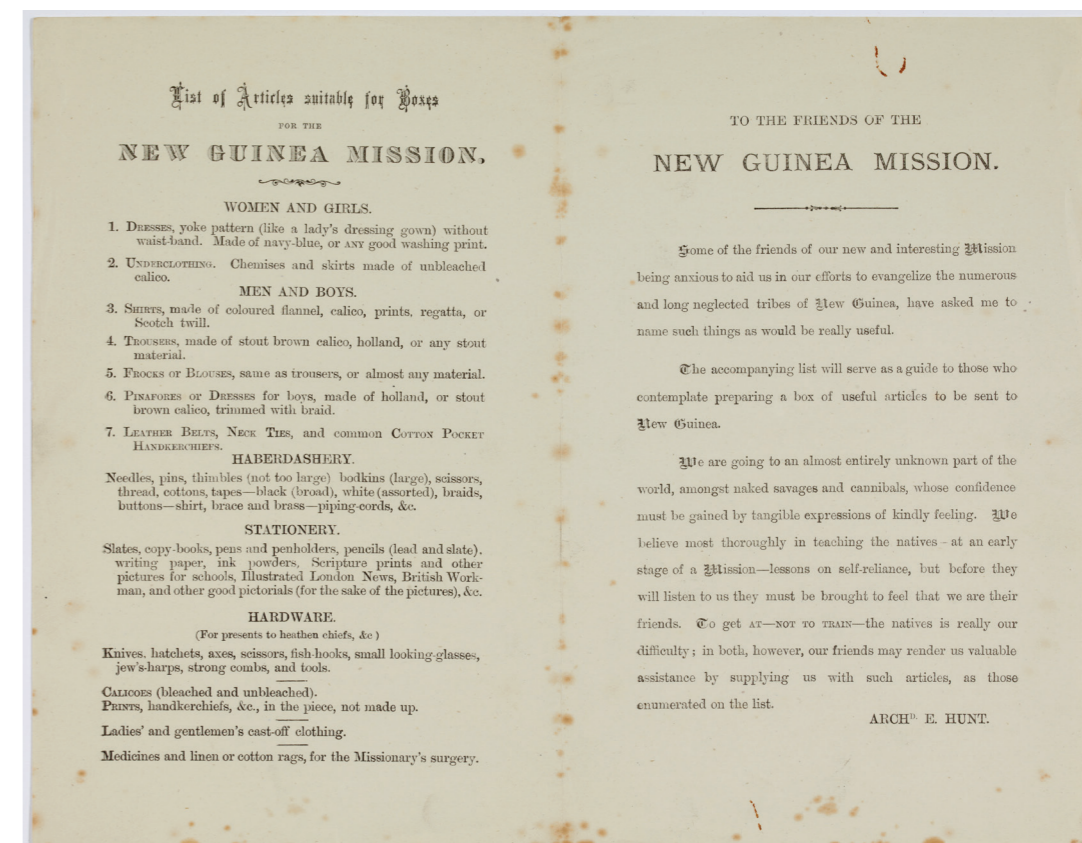


Figure 1. An undated pamphlet by Archibald E. Hunt, who served on Murray Island (1887–9) and then in Port Moresby (1895–1902), exhorting supporters for 'tangible expressions of kindly feeling' (Haddon Papers Envelope 1047, Cambridge University Library).

perceptions of the other's performances. While the LMS called upon their congregations for donations of clothes, tobacco, and iron implements to give to Papuans as 'tangible expressions of their kindly feeling', the missionaries also received items that enfolded them into local circuits of exchange and sociality (Figure 1).

Teasing out the 'making and remaking of relationships' (Strathern 1993:91) that occurred during these transactions, I explore the intentions, histories and experiences materialized in the collections of the Reverends James Chalmers and John H. Holmes. These men's collections form the bulk of the LMS's Papuan objects in the British Museum, and collectively span forty-two years of their experiences in Papua (1877–1919). To complicate our understanding of these collections, I bring the actions of Pacific Island teachers, specifically those of Rarotongans, into view. Doing so reveals how Pacific Islanders played a critical, but unacknowledged role, in the movement of objects into museums, and points to the historical entanglement of Polynesia and Melanesia in the making of contemporary Oceania (Thomas 1989). Finally, I reflect on how material embodiments of these histories continue to shape sociality in PNG.

Object worlds of the LMS

Instead of standing on the beach in a suit of broadcloth with Bible in hand, the pioneer missionary in New Guinea might be seen ... an umbrella in one hand and a small bag in the other containing ... beads, jew's harps, small looking glasses, and matches...

(MacFarlane 1888:31)

Established in 1814, the Society's museum, until being dismantled in the 1910s, was an important arena in which the LMS wove narratives about their efforts through displays (Sivasundaram 2005). The sale of objects collected by the missionaries was also a source of income. As part of the Port Moresby annual collection of 1891, Reverend W.G. Lawes (1839–1907) accepted '325 spears, 65 shell armllets, 92 bows, 180 arrows, besides shields, drums, shell necklaces, feather and other ornaments', in all valued at ten pounds (Lawes 1891:43–7). While these objects were probably sold in Papua to European

collectors, they may very well have become part of revenue generated by sales at the LMS temporary exhibits in Britain (Mathews 1914). Through the 1950s, objects, among other things, could be borrowed to commemorate the deaths of the Chalmers, Tompkins and their party in Goaribari in 1901 (Anonymous 1951a and b). Alongside numerous publications (Barker 1996), these engagements shaped British impressions of Papua and the LMS.

Collecting objects was an important part of the conversion process, as well as being integral to the LMS's production of knowledge about Papua. Lawes, for example, was a prolific photographer, and sold his images through the Sydney based photographer Henry King (Webb 2006). Samuel MacFarlane (1837–1911) sold material to the Museo Preistorico-Ethnographico L. Pigorini in Rome, the National Museum of Scotland and London's Natural History Museum through the taxidermist and artefact dealers E. Gerrard & Sons (Günter 1906; Grottanelli 1951). Despite internal disagreements about the role of trade goods in the LMS's transactions with Papuans, tobacco, beads, and iron hoop remained a central means by which their representatives established and maintained their sociality, and attempted to create the conditions under which proper moral and spiritual relations ensued.

Today's gospel ... is one of tomahawks and tobacco: Revd James Chalmers

Today's gospel with the natives is one of tomahawks and tobacco; we are received by them because of these. By that door we enter to preach the Gospel of Love ...

(Chalmers 1880)

Within the British Museum are 189 objects attributed to Chalmers in three accessions (1891, 1914 and 1979), which reflect his extensive travels from Suau (1877), the Papuan Gulf (1879) and the Fly River (1890) until his death on Goaribari (1901). Building upon a decade of experience in Rarotonga (1867–77), Chalmers carried out his Papuan work with his wives Jane Robertson Hercus (m. 1865) and Sarah Eliza Harrison (m. 1888) – both of whom died there (Langmore 1974). In 1879 Tamate, as Rarotongans called Chalmers and the name by which Papuans referred to him, visited eastern

Papuan Gulf villages of the Toaripi, and then the communities of Vailala (1881), Orokololo (1881) and the Purari Delta (1883), where he helped establish or lay the groundwork for later stations. As a publicist of his efforts, collecting was integral to Chalmers' missionary activity and intertwined with obtaining information for anthropologists and geographers (Chalmers 1898a, 1898b; Welsch 2006: 80).

Chalmers used gifts to establish rapport and build a basis for later visits and conversions. Gift-giving occasions established Chalmers' peaceful intentions, matched Papuan expectations, and formed mutual interdependence. Chalmers carefully noted exchange patterns and actively utilized them, which earned him local credibility. For example, he made use of the friendship network through which the annual *hiri* trade between Motuans and communities in the Papuan Gulf thrived. By October 1881, the newly baptized Motuans, Aruataera and Paeau were holding services during their *hiri* voyages (Chalmers and Gill 1885:228–9). At Silo in 1879, through his Motuan companions, Chalmers 'secured the hat [mask] of the goddess Kaevakuku', though he failed on his second trip to purchase the two idols named Semese and Tauparau (Chalmers and Gill 1885:140). Similarly, at the Toaripi village of Motumotu, Chalmers purchased seven *poilati* and *eharo* masks (oc1914,0418.43 to 79), but 'neither love nor tomahawks could obtain'

Figure 2. A *minia komo* chief's lime gourd and *minia pauka* lime spatula made of wood, obtained by Holmes in about 1900, from Koriki, Purari (oc.1951.07.29a, gourd, height 28 cm; oc.1951.07.29b, spatula, length 32.2 cm).



the large *semese* masks (Chalmers 1887:73). In part of the wide-ranging *hevehe* ceremonies, initiated men wore *poilati* ('sago-bringers') masks, made of painted barkcloth, to obtain sago for the male dancers of barkcloth *eharo* masks, which materialized totemic beings through playful effigies (Williams 1940:264–89). While the selling of these lesser masks substituted for their ritual burning, the large *semese* masks were deemed too sacred to part with.

Not typically dissuaded, Chalmers used his fame, access to trade goods and repeated visits to secure objects from initially unwilling individuals. In an episode he entitled 'The Burning Jewel of Death', Chalmers detailed acquiring a sorcery bundle in Maiva village (Chalmers 1887:310–18). When confronted by Papuan fears of his death upon looking at a particular stone, Chalmers (1887:311) announced '...that cannot kill me. Then I told him of the many charms, &c., I had from other places.' Delighting in brandishing his invulnerability, Chalmers also respected villagers' wishes not to publicly expose objects when collected. Bound up as he became by the sociality of exchange, Chalmers' unusual mobility across cultural groups also allowed him to honour his debts as he wished (Demian 2007). As Chalmers (1895:216) noted, 'I believe in first visits being short, just giving them a taste as it were, and then leaving them to think, and wonder when I shall again return.' Ultimately, however, when Chalmers and his companions were killed on Goaribari as part of the consecration of a new longhouse (Langmore 1974), he fell prey to the demands of local exchange networks.

A wonderful new carving: Revd John Henry Holmes

Our people seem to feel no need of a Saviour. Knives, tomahawk, tobacco seem to appeal to them more. Be it so until the Holy Spirit moves in their hearts and opens their eyes then they will awake to their deeper and true needs.

(Holmes 1907)

Arriving in Iokea in 1894, Holmes spent twenty-five years at the Orokololo (1889–1904) and Urika (1904–19) stations. These sustained stays enabled Holmes to develop wide-ranging relationships that shaped his collection and



Figure 4. *Ita kaea*, a pig's tusk ornament decorated with glass trade beads, coconut-shell discs and vegetable fibre, obtained by James Chalmers from the Toaripi between 1865 and 1900 (oc.1976.16.18, length 22 cm).

ethnography. While Holmes collected until his departure in 1919, his largest collection was formed between 1894 and 1901. While visiting England to marry Alice Middleton, Holmes donated 489 objects to his friends the Sextons (Haddon Papers 1902), who in 1951 sold the collection to the British Museum (oc1951,0701.308). The City of Liverpool Museum acquired 181 of these objects. Holmes also made a collection of 38 objects that the Australian Museum accessioned in 1901, and sold some 83 objects to H.G. Beasley in 1929. He also gave skulls to C.G. Seligmann (1909:257), whom he met at Moru in 1898. This meeting steered Holmes towards an interest in anthropology (Reid 1978:176) that A.C. Haddon furthered by sponsoring him to be a correspondent for the Royal Anthropological Institute (1903–17). Holmes's fluency in six local languages facilitated his Bible translation work (Reid 1978:175) and the production of a range of manuscripts (Barker 1996).

Seeking to blend Christianity with Papuan cultural practices, Holmes engaged chiefs to decorate his first church at Orokolo with 'trophies of shields, bows and arrows' (1899a). Signs of relinquished practices, these displays helped the church resemble a longhouse. Holmes also constructed an outbuilding that he called a longhouse, where 'anyone can come for a chat, a

smoke or what is most congenial to him, here I hope to get many opportunities to fit myself with weapons for the more public work' (1899b). To facilitate his conversions, Holmes attempted to understand rituals and their associated objects (Holmes 1924:76–92, 108–31) and iconography (Holmes 1902:425). He procured a range of ritual objects, such as bullroarers (oc1951,07.4 to 12), carved bamboo cylinders related to sorcery (oc1951,07.32 to 35), carved wands (oc1951,07.27 to 28) and carved dwarf-coconut charms known as *marupai* (oc1951,07.68 to 69).

At the same time, Holmes frequently misunderstood what he collected and the Papuan deployment of the LMS's gifts. A 'chief's lime gourd' is a case in point (Figure 2). Attributed to an unidentified 'Kuriki [Koriki] (bush village)' in the Purari Delta, the lime gourd's top is decorated with 100 wallaby teeth set in gum with a pierced shell disc at its opening, while a cotton-reel surmounts the gourd's wooden spatula (oc1951,07.29a). An inventory compiled from Holmes' journals explains:

The one with the cotton-reel he bought from the chief of the village who had promised to hand it to over the next morning when camp broke up. When he came with it Mr. Holmes found, to his great annoyance, that the beautifully carved little spatula-top had been cut off and this empty cotton reel

Figure 3. *Tora nuru kova*, an incised bark belt made by the Toaripi. Collected by James Chalmers between 1865 and 1900. The belt's sago-fibre binding incorporates red trade cloth (oc.1976.16.1, length 244.5 cm). The second image is the author's own.

substituted. He dared not say what he thought. The chief explained that he had picked up this wonderful new carving near the camp (where one of the boys had been repairing something) no one in the village had ever seen its like and he had therefore decided to add to the beauty and value of his gourd by fixing it on.

(British Museum Ethdoc. 1070)

Recognizing that such adoptions are not straightforward, this encounter appears to be accurately described. Europeans and their things were perceived as being related to ancestors from the sky, and possessed an allure for the Purari, who understood Europeans to be returning kin bringing objects of value (Bell 2006). For the Purari the ostensibly foreign was local and such adoptions extended an object's efficacy. In a similar manner, cloth was cut and beads incorporated alongside shells, while metal

and introduced paint helped enhance carvings (see oc1914,0418.1; oc1976,16.1; oc1976,16.18) (Figure 3).

Holmes's misunderstanding of Papuan materiality was profound. In a letter to Haddon, he casts doubts upon the genuineness of the sculptures of the Elema ancestors Ivo and Ukaipu, obtained by the LMS's J.J.K. Hutchin of Rarotonga (1882–1912). According to Holmes (1920), the Elema possessed only one set of these sculptures, which he collected (see below). For all of his regional knowledge, Holmes's lack of recognition of the fluidity with which the Elema understood ancestors to flow in and out of material forms is striking. The sculptures Holmes collected were just one of many material iterations in which their ancestors dwelt. While surrendering potent forms to the LMS, Papuans retained more than was understood.

Oasis in the desert: pacific island teachers

If the missionary's house is an oasis in the desert, so in a smaller way are the houses of the men from the South Seas, and you will find them everywhere along the coast.

(Lenwood 1917:214)

Arriving from the Loyalty Islands (1871), Cook Islands (1872), Niue (1874), Society Islands (1878) and Samoa (1884), Pacific Island teachers formed the vanguard of the LMS in New Guinea (Lange 2006). Some 190 teachers and their spouses served from 1871 to 1891, and of this number half died and eight were killed. By 1922, Papuan teachers became the mainstay of the LMS's efforts (Quanchi 1997). Pacific Islanders brought their own conceptions of the LMS endeavour and memories of their islands' iconoclasm to Papua, and actively discouraged dancing, destroyed carvings and revealed cult secrets (Mullins and Wetherell 1996). Along with introducing new cooking methods and food crops, teachers imparted weaving techniques for pandanus mats and coconut-leaf fans (Sinclair 1982: 32), and introduced *peroveta anedia* (prophet songs) that illustrated biblical stories (Niles 1998:494). Quickly becoming associated with trade goods, the teachers facilitated the LMS's expansion into the region, working as both translators and guides (Crocombe and Crocombe 1982).



While no direct evidence exists of their involvement in making the Museum's LMS collection, the following examples are suggestive. In a letter to *The Brisbane Courier*, Chalmers (1880:5) comments, 'I know a teacher collecting beetles for [Andrew Goldie], another collecting clubs, &c.; another shields, &c.; another plumes.' A Scottish naturalist and merchant based in Port Moresby, Goldie funnelled materials to various venues, such as the Danish naturalist A.P. Goodwin, who sold a collection to the British Museum (24 June 1885). Nested within this, and other collections, are the teachers' actions.

Hiro Vaine reported similarly instructive events at Samari village, at the mouth of Fly River. On hearing of the villagers' desires to destroy their sorcery things, she and her husband travelled to Samari, where, after some cajoling, three baskets were brought out. Despite protests that she would die, Hiro Vaine exposed the hidden objects. Her husband informed the villagers that 'The most sacred things belong to Tamate and me; the others we shall destroy' (Chalmers 1903:3). These objects may have ended up in Chalmers' collection now in the Museum, or as in the case of the Rarotonga teacher Harry Tuka (dates unknown), they may have been sent home.

Arriving in 1892 in Papua, Tuka and his wife were eventually stationed with Holmes at Iokea (1896–7), Moru (1898–9) and then in Orokolo (1900–5). As part of his work, Tuka recorded the myth of Ivo and Ukaipu (Haddon Papers 1903), and collected their sculptures. While on furlough in Rarotonga in 1899, Tuka gave Ivo (now in the Hastings Museum) to James Cullen and Ukaipu (now in the Horniman Museum) to Hutchin. Presumably tokens of Tuka's esteem for his teachers, these objects were akin to the gifts of natural history specimens that W.W. Gill received from his former pupils when visiting the Papuan Gulf in 1884 (Chalmers and Gill 1885:276–7). These objects and stories were part of the larger performance of the LMS's work and the Cook Islanders' successes in Papua, and were intended to inspire Pacific Island congregations. While more work needs to be done to trace out the extent of the teachers' actions, it is clear they played a role in the making of the LMS collections.

Enduring histories and relations

Traces of the LMS's interactions in Papua are not only materialized in museum collections, but are found commemorated in monuments along the coast. Annual United Church memorial services keep alive memories of Chalmers and his companions' deaths at Goaribari, while the Kerewa in turn understand this event as a reason for their lack of development (Busse 2005). Communities continue to bestow Pacific Islander teachers' names on their children, and use introduced styles of weaving, cooking and song. Other 'tangible expressions of kindly feeling' remain, such as the European adzes I encountered in the Purari Delta. Given to families by the LMS, these objects are now important heirlooms used in resource disputes. Other objects, such as a mother-of-pearl shell

Figure 5. Ivira Kunu of Maipua village in the Purari Delta holds up a *mairi*, mother-of-pearl shell, given to his ancestor by James Chalmers and named Tamate (photograph by Joshua A. Bell, 2001).



possessed by Ivira Kunu in Maipua village, also commemorate these encounters. In a narrative related to me by Ivira in 2001, his shell was a gift to his ancestor Ipai Vai'i's frightened daughter, Aimu, who encountered Chalmers in Hanuabada. Giving her the shell, Chalmers explained 'This shell's name is Tamate. Now you will be called after me, Tamate. Aimu Tamate.' Ipai became Chalmers' principal interlocutor for contacting the Maipua. As remarked upon by Ivira, the LMS 'was brought in by this shell' (Bell 2006:314–15).

While the circumstances of these 'tangible expressions of kindly feeling' differ from those within the LMS collections discussed in the Museum, these objects emerge from the same intersecting histories and transformations that

defined and continue to define the communities with whom the LMS engaged. Various collected for what they were deemed to represent, and as a way to generate much-needed income for the mission, the Museum's LMS collection is remarkable for the histories and relationships it embodies. Collectively these artefacts are just a fraction of the flow of objects between Papuan communities and the LMS, and within each of these groups. Nevertheless, they are important materializations of these histories, the understanding of which is a crucial part of bringing these relationships into view, thereby creating the grounds for more collaborative histories that help us rethink the role of objects in the creation of community, and what museum collections are and perhaps could be.



Figure 10. Vegetable-fibre bag donated by R.W. Williamson in 1913, from Mafulu (oc1913,0407.112, width 51 cm).