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– ARTICLE –

Pacific Prehistory and Theories of Origins in the Work of Reverend William Ellis

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ABSTRACT

The involvement of Christian missionaries in the development of Pacific archaeology often remains on the fringes of the discipline's history. This paper aims to contribute to this area of research by exploring the ideas, methods and legacy of one missionary theorist: Reverend William Ellis (1794–1872). Through an exploration of Ellis's work in Polynesia, specific focus will be directed to the ways in which he read interpretations of Pacific prehistory in material culture, linguistics, oral traditions and island landscapes. Ellis's theories attracted interest from eminent individuals such as Charles Darwin and John Dunmore Lang, creating a complex network of knowledge exchange between missionaries, Pacific Islanders and armchair ethnographers. The involvement of missionaries in early ethnology arguably forms an integral part of the foundations of Pacific archaeology. Investigating and analysing the content and context of work by those such as Ellis has value for understanding the development of the discipline.

Keywords: Polynesia; London Missionary Society; William Ellis; Pacific prehistory; 19th-century ethnology.

INTRODUCTION

In 1893 the Reverend Samuel Ella (1823–1899), delivered an address to the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science entitled 'The origin of the Polynesian Races' (1894: 133–143). He spoke to an audience of international scholars assembled at the Association's fifth annual meeting, held in Adelaide, in his role as President of the Ethnology and Anthropology section. Ella's paper was replete with references to different theorists, among them several Christian missionaries. This paper focuses on one of the earliest of these missionary theorists, the Reverend William Ellis (1794–1872) of the London Missionary Society (LMS), whose publication *Polynesian Researches* (1829, 1831) was described by Ella as 'an old and valuable book' (1893: 139). Ellis's engagement with ideas of Pacific prehistory will be explored in order to consider more broadly how 19th-century missionaries were involved in the development of archaeology in the region. The discussion will examine the types of data Ellis drew upon and his methods of collection and dissemination.

In the words of Ellis himself: '[t]he origin of the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, in common with other parts of Polynesia, is a subject perhaps of more interest and curiosity, than of importance and practical utility'(1829b: 37). However this subject did gain importance in European intellectual discourse during the course of the 19th century, in a manner that was not always without controversy (see Douglas & Ballard 2008). The origins of Pacific inhabitants remains a central question within areas of research in Pacific Archaeology today, with some 19th-century theories having been dispelled and others perpetuated in contemporary studies. From a current perspective, the value is not so much in what early theorists such as Ellis said, but how their ideas were developed, presented and received, and their position within the broader imagination at that time. By understanding this, we can contribute to the history of Pacific archaeology and explore the historical trajectory of certain ideas that have shaped the discipline. Missionary accounts often incorporated particular terminology associated with a desire to proselytise and raise financial and ideological support for the mission. Close reading of particular authors often reveals multiple layers of information available to the reader.

The work of Ellis has been considered by several authors, offering illuminating investigations of his work, particularly as a writer (see Edmond 1998; Smith 1998; Johnston 2003; Farrier 2007) and in relation to early ethnographic methods (Herbert 1991). The discussion below will expand on this, and will place his work concerning Polynesia in the specific context of the history of Pacific archaeology. Ellis's deployment of illustrations will be considered, as well as his writing. As a cultural observer, Ellis enabled public consumption of Polynesia in a period where the dichotomy of religion and science was not yet fully developed. It is perhaps an over-simplification to view the two categories neatly diverging with the advent of Darwinism, and increasing scholarship reveals the

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continuing relationship of the non-secular to the scientific well into the late 19th century in the work of missionaries and non-missionaries alike (Lightman 2000; Fyfe 2004; Sivasundaram 2005)

In the context of this paper, 'archaeology' is viewed as a broad field of study sharing origins with anthropology, but which diverged to form a separate discipline by the early 20th century with distinct research methods and a focus on material culture and prehistory (Gosden 1999). The particular field of 'archaeology' in the 19th-century Pacific focused predominantly on the origins and prehistory of Pacific people and drew on evidence from physical remains and material culture, but also oral traditions, genealogies, racial stereotypes, and linguistic evidence. Investigation of missionary involvement in the development of social evolutionary theories also has relevance to the development of archaeology, but these studies tend to highlight specifically the impact on anthropology (see Gardner 2006; Stocking 1996; Gunson 1994; Barker 1996; Hasinoff 2006). It is of particular interest to consider how early missionary research is positioned in the ancestry of Pacific archaeology by focussing on engagement with theories of migrations of Pacific people, on Oceanic prehistory more generally, and on the use of material culture, oral traditions and comparative linguistics.

William Ellis's early life and work

William Ellis was born in London in 1794, with the family moving to Wisbech, Cambridgeshire shortly thereafter. According to a biography by his son John Ellis, William was an avid learner who, as a boy, was shown the pictures in 'Captain Cook's Voyages' by his father (Ellis & Allon 1873: 8). As a teenager Ellis trained as a nurseryman working with plants. Once abroad in the mission field, these skills 'enabled him to turn his opportunities of observation to good account, and to make important contributions to botanical science, as well as to introduce into different places important food plants' (Ellis & Allon 1873: 308). On application to be a missionary in 1814, Ellis stood before the committee of the LMS, and on being asked where he was educated he replied 'my bedroom' (Darton 1881: 246). This demonstrates that although lacking in a more formal education, Ellis clearly engaged intellectually with the world around him from a young age.

Ellis represented the London Missionary Society in Polynesia from 1817 to 1825. The Society was officially established on 24 September 1795, envisioned as a Society of mixed denomination with members from across Britain (see Lovett 1899). Until 1818 it was known simply as The Missionary Society. In August 1796 the *Duff* sailed from London for the Pacific, carrying the first group of LMS missionaries. On board were thirty people including six women, three children and a number of unordained missionaries who were considered to have necessary skills such as carpentry and other trades required for setting up the mission. This particular LMS endeavour saw the group unprepared culturally and linguistically (Gunson 1978). However, the missionaries were able to make inroads with the community, particularly those in positions of power, to such an extent that Pomare II of Tahiti converted to Christianity in 1812 and, following a chain of events, brought much of the population with him (See Davies 1961 for a detailed account).

Ellis was part of a later wave of LMS missionaries that reached Polynesia in February 1817, just five years after Pomare II's conversion. Ellis's cohort included John Williams, another well-known evangelical. Williams authored a book, entitled *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands* (1837), which was similarly popular to *Polynesian Researches*, selling 38,000 copies in the five years following publication (Prout 1843: 319). According to Christopher Herbert, Williams was an unlikely early proponent of cultural immersion as a method with which to understand the worldview and culture of Pacific communities (1991: 164). Ellis's first station was on Eimeo (now Moʻorea), in the windward islands of the Society Islands 17 km northwest of Tahiti. He then moved to Huahine in the leeward islands of the group, before going to the Hawaiian Islands with his wife and children. Ellis and his family were in Polynesia for almost eight years, which was a relatively short period compared with some LMS missionaries.

Correspondence with the directors of the LMS several months after his arrival in the Society Islands reveals that most of Ellis's time was focussed on learning the local language, which he did under the guidance of more senior missionary Reverend John Davies, and on setting up the mission press (Ellis 1817). Ellis had been trained as a printer for six months prior to departing England and was instrumental in printing the first book in Tahitian in the islands. This significant event saw Pomare II of Tahiti (1782–1821) leading the printing on 30 June 1817, assisted by Ellis (Ellis 1829a: 394). Local people subsequently arrived on a daily basis in the hope of obtaining copies of the various books produced, and to examine the equipment housed in the printing house (Ellis 1829a: 397). This regular interaction with people of varying social statuses from Moʻorea and surrounding islands through the work with the printing press would have given Ellis the opportunity to forge local connections and access local culture.

Writer, artist and missionary

Ellis first published *Polynesian researches, during a residence of nearly six years in the South Sea Islands, including descriptions of the natural history and scenery of the Islands, with remarks on the history, mythology, traditions, government, arts, manners, and customs of the inhabitants*, in two volumes in 1829. It included over 1,000 pages of detailed information about life in Polynesia positioned against an account of missionary work in the area up to

that date. The work was republished in four volumes from 1831–36 to incorporate his 1825 publication *A journal of a tour around Hawaii, the largest of the Sandwich Islands,* which had already been republished in 1826 as a longer volume entitled *Narrative of a Tour through Hawaii, or Owhyee: With Observations on the Natural History of the Sandwich Islands, and Remarks on the Manners, Customs, Traditions, History and Language of their Inhabitants.* This work described travels in the Hawaiian Islands made in 1823, shortly after Ellis relocated there on the request both of American missionaries requiring his assistance and of the Hawaiian King and several chiefs. However, his wife, Mary Mercy Ellis, had become ill and her failing health hindered their remaining in Polynesia, so the family returned to England in 1825. She died in Britain in 1835. Ellis remained in England, and was appointed as Secretary of the LMS in 1831. He remarried in 1837 to Sarah Stickney, a writer, reformer and feminist whose work focussed largely on women's role in British society.

Following his work on Oceania, Ellis also published significant work relating to Madagascar (1838, 1858, 1867, 1869). The later two titles were written after Ellis was posted as a missionary in Madagascar in the 1860s. Among other works, Ellis also wrote the first volume of *The History of the London Missionary Society* (1844). This extensive publication record is indicative of Ellis's status as a prolific writer with a continuing interest in history and culture, as well as the history and work of missions.

This analysis of Ellis's relationship to Pacific archaeology focuses largely on the original 1829 two-volume edition of *Polynesian Researches* and the first London published edition of *Narrative of a Tour through Hawaii,* (1826). However, other editions will be highlighted where relevant. In discussing missionary writing in the 19th century, Anna Johnston describes their published texts as 'curious artefacts'; they encompass aspects of ethnography and linguistics, juxtaposed with accounts of mission activities and history (2003: 32). Both *Polynesian Researches* and *Narrative of a Tour* are, as artefacts, carefully created, bounded entities that are more than purely textual accounts. They incorporate illustrations as well as text that can be interrogated. These illustrations have often been ignored in discussing Ellis's work, but are valuable in interpreting his approach and how his work might have been received. As Amiria Henare has argued, 'artefacts' as a whole do not just symbolise or represent meaning, but can also bring meaning into existence and create multiple relationships over a period of time (2005: 2–5). Popular missionary publications, such as those by William Ellis or John Williams, can be grouped with well-known voyaging texts as a category of artefact that influenced 19th-century popular imagination and created and perpetuated ideas about Polynesian culture into the present day.

The content and deployment of illustrations within Ellis's texts are striking in a period just prior to the development and rapid dissemination of the use of photography by Europeans as a medium for recording distant lands. The figures in *Narrative of a Tour through Hawaii* were largely based on Ellis's sketches, offering a glimpse of his perspective within their lines. This is confirmed in a letter Ellis wrote to the Directors of the LMS from O'ahu "[A] full account of our tour together with our journal and the drawings taken on Hawaii I hope also to send by an early conveyance" (Ellis 1823). The identity of the original illustrator of the sketches converted into woodblock prints in *Polynesian Researches* (1829a; 1829b) remains unclear. There are five plates signed by Captain R. Elliot, with an acknowledgement to him in the Preface (1829a). It seems likely that the other illustrator is Ellis himself given the lack of any other signature or acknowledgement, and the fact that the drawings are stylistically similar to ones he made in the Hawaiian Islands. Ellis was present as the first two volumes and later editions were put through the press, and so presumably would have had some authority over the accompanying figures.

Within Ellis's correspondence and related archival material, there is little reflection on his cultural research and the methods employed. This is perhaps unsurprising for the early 19th century, when the idea of keeping a field diary with such illuminating reflexive detail seems unlikely. However, reading both his published texts and other materials can reveal aspects of his theories, methods and motivations, as well as the relationships he had with local communities.

MIGRATION THEORY AND EVIDENCE OF PACIFIC PREHISTORY

In his diffusionist theory of the origins of the inhabitants of the geographical zone known to Europeans from the mid-18th century as Polynesia, Ellis proposed that people moved from Malaysia across the northern Pacific, across the Bering Straits, and came east via north and central or south America (1829b: 37–63). In English, 'Polynesia' designated the large region covering the East Indies and the South Sea Islands up until the late 19th century (Douglas 2011: 17). Ellis used knowledge of trade winds to explain this migration (1829b: 48–52), an idea that he returned to in the lengthier four-volume edition of *Polynesian Researches* (1831). This suggestion had been put forward at the beginning of the 19th century by Joaquín Martínez de Zuñiga, a Spanish missionary (1803), and was from the 1940s onwards strongly associated with Thor Heyerdahl (see Heyerdahl 1941 for an early presentation of his views). Ellis argued in his earlier *Narrative of a Voyage* that Hawaiian Islanders likely originally migrated from the Georgian Islands (1826: 409), which in today's terminology are the Windward Group of the Society Islands. In the pages that follow it is clear Ellis had already begun developing his theory of migration. Using a very brief reference to some of the evidence later developed in *Polynesian Researches* he concluded: 'These circumstances seem to favour the

conjecture that the inhabitants of the islands west of Tongatabu [Tonga] have an Asiatic origin entirely; but that the natives of the eastern islands may be a mixed race, who have emigrated from the American continent, and from the Asiatic islands' (Ellis 1826: 412).

READING MATERIAL CULTURE

In the development of his theory, Ellis drew on evidence he had gathered from material culture, linguistics, landscape, and oral traditions. From the first of these categories, Ellis listed the following as showing cultural connections with the Aleutian Islands, Kurile (Kuril) Islands, Mexico and some parts of South America: the resemblance of dress to that of the poncho; the game of chess; and the adorning of hair with feathers (1829b: 46). For Ellis the poncho was directly comparable with the garment known in the Society Islands as a *tiputa*, which he described as resembling each other 'in every respect' except for the material (1829b: 126). He cited a Dr Buchanan's account of the staff of a 'Malay chief' in Penang topped with human hair taken from an enemy at death as corresponding exactly with a Marquesan practice of decorating clubs and 'walking-sticks' with hair from those killed in battle (Ellis 1829b: 45). These 'walking sticks' are likely to be staffs carried by people of status (*tokotoko pio'o*). In a nod towards archaeological excavation in the four-volume version of *Polynesian Researches,* Ellis described stone adzes or hatchets 'found some distance from the surface', along with stone pavements and house foundations on Fanning Island, midway between Hawai'i and Tahiti. He compared the tools with those used by people in North and South Pacific 'at the time of discovery' and concluded their similarity was evidence that in the past Polynesian island populations extended further (Ellis 1833: 106). The 'time of discovery', which Ellis uses as a point of reference, appears to be that of the mapping of the Pacific on the voyages of Captain Cook.

The importance placed on material culture is particularly evident within the accompanying illustrations, with 14 of 24 in the two volume 1829 edition of *Polynesian Researches* specifically portraying objects and technology. The majority of these feature within the 16 wood engravings believed to be based on Ellis's sketches. Art historian Bernard Smith observed that missionary art in the early 19th century tended to contrast with 'the graphic repertoire of the scientific voyages – plants, animals, landscapes, native peoples, and natural wonders' (1985: 317). However, Ellis's work is largely a departure from this. Even figures depicting sacred carvings, whilst labelled as 'Idols' (1829a: 272; 1829b: Plate 1), are drawn with material accuracy (Figure 1). They differ from more animated drawings in other texts expressing stereotypical 'heathen' qualities, such as an illustration in the LMS *Missionary Sketches*, captioned 'Destruction of the Idols at Otaheite; pulling down a Pagan Altar, and building a Christian Church' (1819). In the case of the sacred carvings, the more functional drawings in Ellis's work may have been a means of removing any spiritual qualities in the artefacts for a European audience, but they also fit within a classificatory approach in which Ellis documented and categorised artefacts. The majority of Ellis's drawings portray object typologies, for example, if we consider his depictions of maritime craft, the reader can compare a war canoe with a single canoe and a screened canoe (1829a: 165, 168, 172) (Figures 2 and 3). These are accompanied by a lengthy and detailed description of the use and manufacture of different canoes, accompanied by local names (1829a: 163–182). Another engraving includes

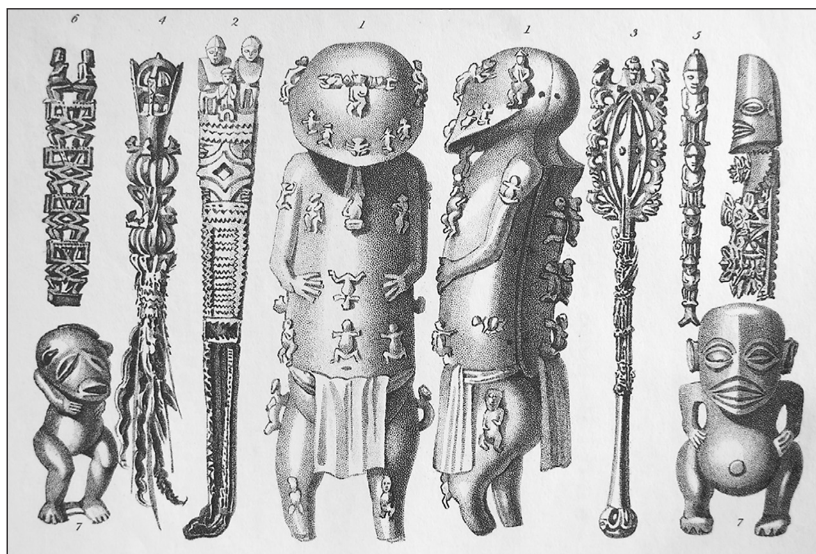

Figure 1. 'Idols worshipped by the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands', illustration from William Ellis's *Polynesian Researches*, Volume II (1829b: Title page)

Figure 2. 'War canoe', from William Ellis's *Polynesian Researches*, Volume I (1829a: 168).

Figure 3. 'Skreened canoe', from William Ellis's *Polynesian Researches*, Volume I (1829a: 165).

images of stone adzes alongside a breadfruit splitter and wooden headrests (1829b: 181). Again these are described in minute detail, recording data such as the dimensions of a headrest, the type of wood used, the shape and the mode of manufacture. This attention given to material culture is comparable to today's archaeological studies. Artefacts are observed in a manner that is both classificatory and comparative, approaches that have been core components during the history of archaeological methods.

An aspect of Ellis's cultural research with potential to reveal more about his approach to material culture is his collection of artefacts. For example, it has been suggested that one of the only known baskets[1] collected by the LMS came via Ellis (King 2015: 129). This acquisition demonstrates Ellis's engagement with the functional aspects of local culture, implying an interest in technology. Such a focus is aligned with a classificatory approach to material culture linked to archaeological typologies. It is associated with important 19th-century collectors such as A.H.L.F Pitt Rivers who viewed Polynesian cultural artefacts as more than 'curios' (Chapman 1985).

LINGUISTIC PATHS

From the beginning of his time in the mission field, Ellis devoted himself to learning Tahitian and being able to communicate with the people he met. These skills subsequently allowed him to build relationships within the community, which he used in the missionary endeavour of conversion, but also enabled him to gather and interpret cultural data. A grasp of language could provide Ellis and other linguistically skilled missionaries with a window into the world around them, and a means of realising the complexity of the society in which they lived (Herbert 1991: 187).

Ellis also used his aptitude for languages to record linguistic evidence for his theory of Pacific origins and migrations. He highlighted the similarity between certain terms used in the mythology of the people of India whom he terms the 'Hindoos' and that of South Sea Islanders (1829b: 42–44). Ellis claimed that 'a tabular view' of the languages of inhabitants of Madagascar, Polynesia and the Americas and of a number of Asiatic and Malayan languages would show that in prehistory 'either the inhabitants of these distant parts of the world maintained frequent intercourse with each other, or that colonies from some one of them, originally peopled, in part or altogether, the others' (1829b: 48). While very basic, Ellis's approach echoes modern anthropological and archaeological approaches to the value of linguistic information.

MYTHOLOGY AND ORAL TRADITION

Ellis's linguistic skills allowed him to collect mythologies and genealogies directly from Tahitian voices. The study of these oral traditions was a popular means for interpreting the origins of people in the 19th century. In a chapter devoted to mythology within the first volume of *Polynesian Researches*, Ellis detailed origin myths recorded in the Society Islands. He maintained that oral traditions, customs and language of residents of the Society Islands and surrounding areas are most useful in learning about the origins of the Polynesians when they are compared with other stories from around the world (1829a: 42). With this approach that might be considered today as diffusionist, Ellis positioned the story of Ta'aroa, who created man from earth or sand, and a myth that tells of a deluge (1829a: 42). It was common for missionaries to put forth notions of origins based on biblical stories (Samson 2001: 116). However, Ellis asserted that rather than providing evidence of Polynesians having descended from an ancient Hebrew nation, it might show contact with people who had an awareness of Biblical stories. This is evidence of a more nuanced awareness by a missionary of the possible route along which stories similar to those in the Bible might have travelled. It challenges an assertion that missionaries had '[N]o apparent awareness of the problem of contamination' from contact with Europeans and others already familiar with Christian scriptures (Samson 2001: 117). It is unlikely this awareness of the impact of more recent cultural contact was unique to Ellis, and reiterates the need to avoid generalising missionary approaches to indigenous history.

The use of oral tradition in archaeology has a tumultuous relationship stretching beyond the Pacific. Taking as an example the case of Hawaiian archaeology, the popularity of using oral traditions fell out of favour in the 1920s as Herbert E. Gregory, Director of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Hawai'i at the time, considered the approach too unscientific (Dye 1989: 7). This trend has seen a reversal in varying geographical areas in recent decades, including the Hawaiian Islands, as some have acknowledged the research possibilities of integrating oral traditions and genealogical research with archaeological techniques, to form a broader picture of the past (e.g. Sheppard *et al.* 2004; Kirch 2012; Hommon 2013)

At the close of the 18th century, many Europeans viewed the Pacific world they encountered through categories of difference that followed developments in natural science rather than being based in purely religious notions of human difference (Thomas 1994; Edmond 1997; Douglas 2008). Well into the 19th century, many theorists, both missionary and non-missionary, blended Biblical and natural history elements. It would thus be erroneous to assume that all ethnological research conducted by missionaries in the early decades of European expansion in the Pacific was firmly based in Biblical interpretations of prehistory. The engagement of Christian missionaries with a classificatory and comparative worldview should be viewed in relation to Enlightenment views and the subsequent emergence of more scientifically based theories (Gunson 1994; Stanley *et al.* 2001; Sivasundaram 2005). Such theories contributed to shaping the foundations of contemporary archaeological and anthropological thought.

LANDSCAPE AND SACRED SITES

Ellis's work contains early data on and accompanying drawings of the landscape and important sites in Polynesia, which have been a source of interest for Pacific archaeology. His work on Hawaiian sites was particularly important with archaeologist John F.G Stokes setting out in 1907 to map temples or *heiau* on Hawai'i Island by following the route taken by Ellis in 1823 (Dye in Stokes 1991: 10). Landscape and site drawings based on originals made *in situ* by Ellis are prevalent in *Narrative of a Voyage* (1826). One of these shows an ancient ruined Hawaiian fortification of archaeological interest at time of recording (Figure 4). Kirch cites this particular depiction as one of the earliest drawings of a Hawaiian archaeological site (1985: 10, Fig. 5). As with other illustrations in Ellis's work, site drawings accompany detailed descriptions, including those of several *heiau*. Ellis's work offers an important early description of a highly sacred *heiau* named *Hale o Keawe*, which was part of the *pu'uhonua*, a place of refuge, located at Hōnaunau on Hawai'i Island. It housed the bones of the paramount chiefs, which were often kept in wicker caskets of anthropomorphic shape (Kirch 1985: 161). Another detailed illustration appearing in the 1827 edition onwards shows a close up of a carving from the ruins of an old *heiau* at Ahu'ena in Kona on Hawai'i Island (Ellis 1827: 407). Six illustrations within the 1829 edition of *Polynesian Researches* can be categorised as depicting landscape/sites, including the tomb of Pomare at Papaoa, Tahiti (1829b: 535). In addition, Ellis provided information on the different types of *marae* (temples) and their structure. Some of this information was sourced from earlier missionaries who witnessed temples in a more complete state prior to any alteration caused by Christian influence (1829b: 206–208).

As with Ellis's depictions of material culture, landscapes and sites are portrayed with a realist air, providing useful data from the period. However, at times the language used to describe such locales slips into judgemental observations that move away from those that might be considered objective and 'scientific'. This is evident, for example, in his account of human sacrifices provided within ethnographic information on the ritual use of *marae* (tem-

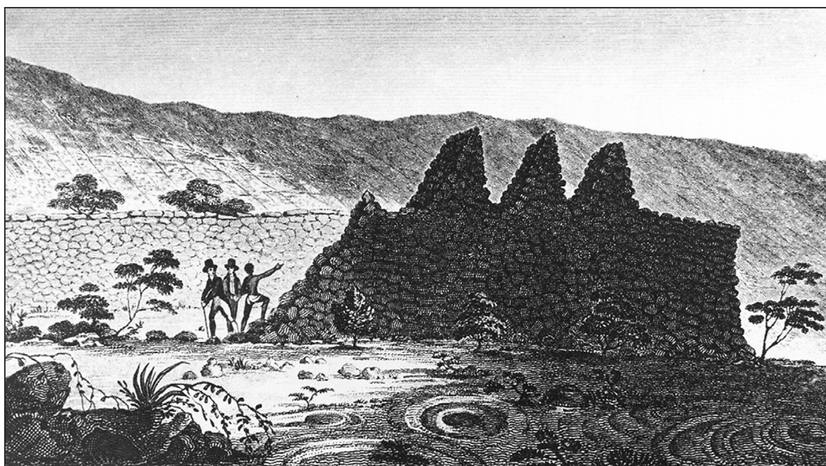

Figure 4. 'Ruins of an ancient fortification, near Kairua', from William Ellis's *Narrative of a Tour through Hawaii, or Owhyee* (1826).

ples) in the Society Islands (1829b: 209–214). If we are able to identify these value judgements, then we can see that at their core Ellis's publications provide useful historical site information, but they also serve as a reminder of the coexistence of 'science' and 'religion' within his work.

MISSIONARY APPROACHES TO RESEARCH

Nineteenth-century missionaries were some of the few outsiders living for long periods of time in Pacific Islander communities. They were expected by their respective missionary organisation to learn the local language and develop knowledge of customs and culture. While this was essential for the missionary aim of implementing conversion and accompanying cultural changes, some individuals such as Ellis also used these skills for in-depth research.

William Ellis was in a privileged position as he carried out his Pacific research in a period prior to the specialisation of particular scientific disciplines (see Sivasundaram 2005). He would therefore not be excluded from academic circles that might later have considered him an amateur lacking in any formal scientific training. He also arrived in the Society Islands at a period of transition in which missionaries were able to focus less on so-called pioneering mission work and had more time to engage with intellectual scientific thought. This is not to say that the first waves of LMS missionaries did not engage in such activities. Earlier missionaries in the Society Islands, such as John Davies who was there from 1801 to 1855, were interested in collecting cultural information and artefacts, while attempting to proselytise (King 2011: 4–6). This provided the foundation on which the likes of William Ellis and John Williams could build their more detailed studies.

Missionaries who did have an interest in reporting on other cultures did not always do this in ways that could be purely understood as propaganda. While propaganda texts provided 'the narrative of conversion, which contrasted former savagery with a subsequently elevated and purified Christian state' (Thomas 1994: 126), other narratives were simultaneously produced for consumption. Bronwen Douglas has observed that missionary representations of different cultures should be read cautiously, but not be totally abandoned by placing them in the realms of 'ideologically offensive' material (2004: 5). Reverend Samuel Ella, for example, was considered both an intellectual and a missionary, having worked for the LMS in Samoa and New Caledonia from 1847 until 1876. His position as President of the Ethnology committee of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science is indicative of the acceptance of his work by many in the wider academic community at the time. Throughout the 19th century there were many non-missionaries who accepted the knowledge and access missionaries could provide to other cultures, even if they did not fully align themselves with the religious aspects of the work. This was the case from the very inception of the LMS when the famous naturalist Joseph Banks gave his patronage to the Society. Banks and Thomas Haweis, one of the LMS founders, fostered a mutually beneficial relationship which essentially allowed Banks access to plant specimens even though he did not fully agree with the evangelical motivations of the LMS (Sivasundaram 2005: 97–102).

The intention here is not to claim that William Ellis's work is without elements of mission propaganda, but rather that there is a much more nuanced relationship between religious and scientific elements. He explained in the preface to *Polynesian Researches* that as a result of the work of missionaries in the Society Islands, ancient customs and systems were being lost and would be relegated to 'oblivion' unless information could be gathered from the living people who still remembered pre-missionary life (1829a: vi-vii). This reflective acknowledgement of negative missionary impact, while sounding like a precursor to the salvage paradigm popular towards the end of the 19th century, appears to echo concern for the loss of culture. However, as Christopher Herbert shows, such concern sits in stark contrast to an earlier passage where readers are informed that missionaries are not social scientists gathering data (1991: 168). This contrast is maintained throughout the volumes, as Ellis's tone seesaws from contempt for certain practices and rejoicing at missionary endeavour, to a fascination and respect for what he portrayed in many instances as a complex society. This is also seen to some extent in his *Narrative of a Voyage* (1826).

The extent to which mission propaganda featured in Ellis's original vision for both *Narrative of a Voyage* (1826) and *Polynesian Researches* (1829) remains unclear. The various editions of both texts were put through the mission press once Ellis was back in England, where he completed the works and oversaw their publication. This would imply he had some control over content. However, the LMS is known to have exercised censorship over other missionary accounts, exemplified in its blocking the publication of John Davies' work completely (Edmond 1997: 120). In reference to *Polynesian Researches* in the 1830 LMS Annual report, it was stated that Ellis had 'been publishing his interesting work on the progress of Christianity in the South Seas' (LMS 1830: 389). This seems an inappropriate description of the overall content of Ellis's writing and illustrations, perhaps reflecting what the Society actually wanted him to write. It was likely necessary for Ellis to include reports of the seemingly 'uncivilised' elements of a Pacific culture in order to foster support for LMS work and justify his very existence as a missionary. It is with a different voice that Ellis engaged with ethnology, and it is this duality in his work that positioned it as a key source of information on Polynesian culture throughout the 19th century.

Missionaries formed distinct relationships with community members as conversion took place, further enabling engagement in early research. Local men and women were employed in the mission station, and political allies

were sought from people of status. These different relationships allowed missionaries to be privy to particular cultural information. Ellis is known to have formed close relationships with a number of powerful men, including Kuakini the Governor of Hawai'i Island. A portrait of Kuakini and another of Makoa, his Hawaiian guide, are the only named portraits known to be drawn by Ellis within his Pacific work, the only other portrait being of Pomare II of Tahiti drawn by another hand (1825: Frontispiece; 1826:84; 1827: Facing pg. 85; 1829a: Frontispiece). It should be noted that Kuakini is depicted in the original 1825 *A Journal of a Tour around Hawaii* in an English style dress shirt and jacket, probably by his own choice. However, his portrait is entirely absent from the 1826 edition, and all later editions show Kuakini wearing a Hawaiian feather cloak, which is perhaps a signifier of added exoticism by the author or printers for the purposes of audience appeal. If we consider recent scholarship on missionary photography, the presence of these three illustrations might be seen as suggestive of the close relationships Ellis had with these men, particularly in the two sketches by his own hand. In exploring the use of photography and photographs from 1875–80 by the Reverend George Brown (1835–1917), a missionary engaged in ethnography based in New Britain, Gardner and Philp reveal his use of photography to form relationships (2006). They point out that the very technology employed in photographic methods called for close interaction between photographer and sitter (Gardner & Philp 2006:6). These relationships were used to gain status and to collect artefacts and cultural information. In the case of Ellis's pre-photographic illustrations, a similar amount of time and interaction would be needed for the creation of accurate drawings of individuals. This in turn could increase the extent of information he could gather. Ellis's use of drawing as a means to form relationships does not seem such a stretch when we consider his later activities in Madagascar. There, Ellis used sketching and newly learned photographic skills to promote the aims of the LMS and influence those around him, particularly the royal family (Peers 1997:25). Simon Peers has noted that Ellis's photography in Madagascar also demonstrates his status as 'scientific observer and recorder' (1997:23). The deployment of illustrations in Ellis's early work could be read in a similar way, indicating his artistic gaze and engagement with the visual in a systematic and scientific manner.

From the mid- to late 19th century onwards, evidence emerges of missionaries beginning to engage with much more systematic methods for the collection of data which might be viewed as more 'scientific'. This shift can be seen in the methodical research carried out by Robert Henry Codrington of the Melanesian Mission and Lorimer Fison, a Methodist missionary in Fiji (see Gardner 2004). Such changing practice coincided with emerging methods in disciplines such as ethnology. Edward Tylor developed *Notes and Queries on Anthropology, For the Use of Travellers and Residents in Uncivilised Lands* (1874), which was periodically revised by other editors over the years. This and other less formal questionnaires were sent to missionaries, among others, in the field who were thus in a position to provide detailed information (Urry 1972, Stocking 2001, Petch 2007). These formal surveys and the relationships missionaries formed with particular scholars probably had a bearing on their interests and ideas, and vice versa. Samuel Ella, for example, maintained a relationship with linguist Sidney Herbert Ray that was reflected in a linguistic focus in Ella's published works. Ray's correspondence and collected notebooks held at the School of Oriental and African Studies at University College London, show his connection with many other missionaries for the purposes of comparative linguistics (e.g. Michelsen to Ray 1891; Ivens n.d.). W.H.R. Rivers similarly utilised data and local informants provided by, among others, Reverend Charles Elliot Fox of the Melanesian Mission and Reverend Frederick Bowie, a Scottish Presbyterian working in Vanuatu (Rivers 1914; Langham 2012:94–117). William Ellis can therefore be positioned in the early period of Anglophone missionary interest in Pacific history and culture, contributing to the development of Pacific archaeology and anthropology.

LEGACY OF WILLIAM ELLIS'S WRITING

Ellis's Pacific writing influenced the likes of naturalist Charles Darwin, writer Herman Melville, theologian and ethnologist John Dunmore Lang, and James Edge-Partington who included much of Ellis's data in his seminal publication on Pacific material culture *An Album of the Weapons, Tools, Ornaments, Articles of Dress, etc., of the Natives of the Pacific Islands: drawn and described from examples in public & private collections in Australasia* (1890). Ron Edmond cites Ellis's work as being as influential as the accounts of Cook and Bougainville's voyages in creating an idea of the Pacific in the Anglophone public imagination (1998:149). With excerpts of *Polynesian Researches* being published in a series in newspapers such as *The Australian* in 1831, his writing was in wide circulation and accessible to a broad audience. As noted above, John F.G Stokes (1991) consulted Ellis's work on the Hawaiian Islands at the turn of the 20th century as did T. G. Thrum, another early figure in the development of archaeology there (see Spriggs, this volume).

The status of missionary knowledge and contribution changed over the course of the 19th century as archaeology and anthropology developed into scientifically orientated field-based disciplines. Missionaries continued to act as intermediaries for certain scholars, offering informants, data and artefact collections. Simultaneously, missionary knowledge became increasingly subject to dispute over its validity, particularly as the activities of conversion were identified as part of the very reason for the loss of 'traditional' culture, which social scientists in the early years of the 20th century sought to record.

The key criticisms levelled at the work of Ellis and other missionaries writing in the 19th century, are the presence of Biblical overtones and a lack of accurate and extensive data (Kirch 1985: 52). From a contemporary perspective, it is unlikely that most associated with the field of archaeology would disagree with this. However, if we consider his work in context, Ellis's research remains surprisingly thorough, presenting detailed oral traditions, object typologies and descriptions of sites. It is also crucial to acknowledge that Ellis published his work on Polynesia at a time in which science and religion remained heavily entangled for both missionaries and non-missionaries. It has been the intention to demonstrate that the particular status and activities of missionaries could give them unique access to gather extensive data, if they were so inclined, and to engage with the worlds they encountered. Passages with a Biblical slant exist within Ellis's work but generally his missionary presence is felt sporadically in his word choice and value judgements placed at certain junctures, rather than as a running interpretation.

Kirch has observed that 19th-century enquiries into prehistory were not specifically 'archaeological'; instead linguistic and philological evidence were combined with oral traditions and genealogies (1985: 9). As demonstrated, William Ellis did use these categories of evidence, but also drew heavily on detailed evidence from material culture and offered a record of culturally significant monuments and sites. If we consider the level of detail in Ellis's data, and his focus on typologies, technology, and material remains, it seems Ellis's research can be situated in the early developement of Pacific archaeology. While Ellis was clearly not an archaeologist, his work perhaps demonstrates that a broad view of the term 'archaeological' is required when building a history of the discipline. This would incorporate a range of early research methods and interests, some of which may today be more aligned with the fields of linguistics or anthropology, but which two hundred years ago were not subject to the same disciplinary separation.

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Endnotes

1 This particular basket is a small example made of intricately woven pandanus, collected from Huahine, Society Islands, and currently housed at Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, New Zealand (Object ID: E149.23). It was originally given to the Wisbech Museum, Cambridgeshire, on 28 August 1841.

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La préhistoire du Pacifique et les théories originelles dans le travail du Révérend William Ellis

RÉSUMÉ :

L'implication des missionnaires chrétiens dans le développement de l'archéologie du Pacifique reste souvent en marge de l'histoire de la discipline. Cet article vise à contribuer à ce domaine de recherche en explorant les idées, les méthodes et l'héritage d'un théoricien missionnaire: le révérend William Ellis (1794–1872). Par un examen du travail d'Ellis en Polynésie, une attention particulière sera accordée à la lecture que faisait celui-ci de la culture matérielle, la linguistique, les traditions orales et les paysages insulaires pour interpréter la préhistoire du Pacifique. Les théories d'Ellis ont suscité l'intérêt de personnalités éminentes telles que Charles Darwin et John Dunmore Lang, créant ainsi un réseau complexe d'échanges de connaissances entre missionnaires, insulaires du Pacifique et ethnologues de cabinet. L'implication des missionnaires dans les débuts de l'ethnologie fait certainement partie intégrante des fondements de l'archéologie du Pacifique. Étudier et analyser le contenu ainsi que le contexte du travail réalisé par des personnages tels qu'Ellis est important pour comprendre le développement de la discipline.