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– ARTICLE –

Gendering the Archaeology of the Mission Frontier in the New Hebrides

James L. Flexner[1]

ABSTRACT

The New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) was the location of a series of sometimes dramatic encounters with Presbyterian missionaries from the 1840s through the early 20th century. Survey and excavations of mission landscapes revealed the ways that missionaries sought to carve out a 'civilised' space in the 'savage' Melanesian islands where they settled. Mission encounters were structured around gendered relationships, both in the domestic sphere between missionary husbands, wives, and children, and in the connections missionaries formed with local Islanders. Evidence from nine years of archaeological research on mission landscapes and material culture from southern Vanuatu is used to explore the implications of gender for understanding these colonial encounters.

Keywords: missions, gender, colonialism, New Hebrides

INTRODUCTION

Angela Middleton's fieldwork, documentary research, and analyses of material culture from the encounters between Christian missionaries and Māori in the Bay of Islands during the 19th century was foundational work in Pacific historical archaeology. Her research proved inspirational for my own study of similar, if slightly later colonial contacts in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu; I will use both terms, with New Hebrides representing the colonial, pre-independence past and Vanuatu representing present and future). One of the major contributions in Angela's research at Te Puna (Middleton 2008) and her subsequent collaboration with Ian Smith at Hohi (Smith *et al*. 2012, 2014) was to elaborate on the role of gender in the establishment of missionary settlement and relationships with local Māori. Her focus on the 'silent voices' and 'hidden lives' of women, children, and Māori provided a powerful counterpoint to a white, male-dominated documentary record typical of the colonial British world (Middleton 2006, 2007).

The documentary history of the Presbyterian missions in the New Hebrides likewise comes to us primarily from the male missionaries engaged in the work of conversion from 1848 until the early 1900s, though there were both published diaries and letters by missionary women (e.g. Watt 1896) and recent histories that included the perspectives of mission wives (e.g. Adams 1984). Building from these perspectives, archaeological research provides critical material for understanding gender in the early missionary encounters in southern Vanuatu. The material I draw on in this paper derives from my research on the early mission sites of Tanna and Erromango islands, as well as collaborative research on Aniwa and Aneityum (Figure 1; Flexner 2016; Flexner *et al*. 2018a: 249–250; Zubrzycka *et al*. 2018). In this paper I focus on what these materials offer for an understanding of gender in remote Pacific mission stations at multiple scales (see Lock and Molyneaux, eds. 2006; Mathieu and Scott, eds. 2004). Each scale, from landscape, to household, to material culture offers a different, if overlapping perspective of the role of gender as a structuring element of colonial relationships. This includes the gendered relationships that existed within the Western family structure, and the ways that relationships between coloniser and colonised became engendered in the Pacific (e.g. Jolly and Macintyre, eds. 1989).

Gender has been a prominent topic of discussion in archaeology for several decades (e.g. du Cros and Smith, eds. 1993; Gero and Conkey, eds. 1991). Feminist archaeologies have explored the role of material culture in constructing the body and gendered relationships (Joyce 2000, 2008), sexuality in ancient cultures (Schmidt and Voss, eds. 2001), and the politics of gendered representations in archaeology (Prados Torreira 2016). Historical archaeology has explored similar themes (e.g. Voss 2008a, 2008b; Voss and Casella, eds. 2011). Spencer-Wood (2001, 2010) offers a useful perspective on the variegated nature of 'power' in gendered relationships of the modern world. Rather than assuming a hegemonic white male dominance that was then resisted somehow by colonised peoples and women, Spencer-Wood divides the dynamics into 'power over' (hegemony), 'power to' (agency), and 'power with' (collabora-

1 School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, the University of Sydney

Corresponding author: james.flexner@sydney.edu.au

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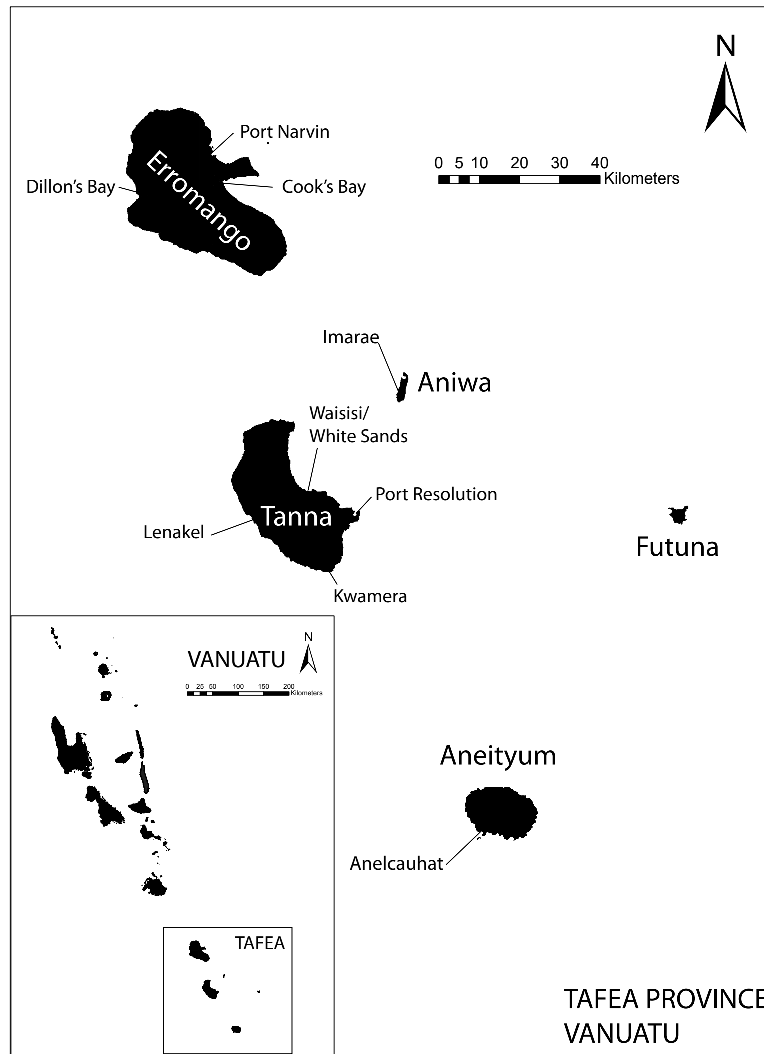

Figure 1. Map of southern Vanuatu, including islands and locations mentioned in the text.

tion). Monton-Subias and Hernando (2018) have offered an important analysis of the gendered narratives of historical archaeology. They argue these narratives place emphasis on the active and innovative doings of the male sphere, at the expense of the 'maintenance activities' of women and colonised peoples surviving a world order in which they were displaced or marginalised. These two perspectives particularly inform my approach to understanding gender at multiple scales in the New Hebrides missions.

TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES IN SOUTHERN VANUATU

Information about the gendered relationships that occurred in 'traditional' New Hebridean societies before the arrival of missionaries is coloured somewhat by the missionary gaze (see Douglas 2001). Missionaries who wrote about gendered relationships often focused on the negative, for example shocking audiences with stories about widow strangulation (Turner 1861: 93–94), a practice that in fact was quite rare or possibly even fabricated. Early twentieth century ethnographers writing about the region (e.g. Humphreys 1926) were heavily influenced by missionary sources in their descriptions of traditional societies. Modern Melanesians express their ties to customary ideas and practices using the term '*kastom*', which remains a signifier of tradition as well as active invention and political contestation (Jolly 1992; Lindstrom 1982). In the present, notions of *kastom* are for many people tied to their religious identification as Christians (Flexner and Spriggs 2015), so again the missionary voice is to some extent entangled with how living Ni-Vanuatu imagine relationships between the sexes are meant to be organised. Nonetheless there are a few aspects of traditional society that can be reconstructed from available sources to give a general sense of relationships among men, women, and children across the southern New Hebrides. My perspectives on 'traditional' gender are shaped from a combination of reading missionary sources

(e.g. Robertson 1902; Turner 1864; Watt 1896) and early ethnographies (e.g. Humphreys 1926) 'against the grain' (Kayes 1989); critical contemporary analysis including indigenous scholarship (Naupa, ed. 2011); and my own experiences doing fieldwork in Vanuatu (Flexner 2018).

Gender in the New Hebrides was related to family structure which was in turn related to subsistence and settlement. Human relationships were gendered in order to carry out the 'maintenance activities' (Monton-Subias and Hernando 2018) necessary to organising daily life. Key activities included growing and cooking food, rearing children, maintaining kinship and ancestral relationships, and organising collaborative events such as feasts and rituals. Labour cycles were focused on gardening and fishing. Kinship relations were oriented towards organising different kinds of work to maintain the productivity of gardens. The main crops were yams, taro, sugarcane, a variety of vegetables, and the socially and ritually important intoxicant kava (*Piper methysticum*). The main source of protein was fish and shellfish, though pigs were raised for competitive feasts that were important to island politics (Spriggs 1986). Families would usually have access to multiple garden plots and fishing grounds, ideally offering different kinds of conditions (soils, rainfall, elevation) to allow people to grow or gather everything they needed. Agriculture was practiced on a rotating basis. Each year the family would leave some plots fallow, while actively working others through a cycle of clearing and burning, planting and harvesting, and leaving the forest to return as secondary growth. The physical labour of planting and harvesting was made possible by the work of specialists in agrarian magic, a role usually played by men of great, often jealously-guarded spiritual knowledge (Bonnemaison 1991; Flexner 2016: 20, 65; Flexner *et al*. 2018a: 249–253; Humphreys 1926: 180–182; Robertson 1902: 376–381).

Villages in the southern New Hebrides provided another node in island settlement patterns, consisting primarily of sleeping and cooking houses for families. Sometimes the cooking and sleeping house would be separated. Families were usually multi-generational and somewhat flexible in terms of the kinship relationships they represented, not necessarily following a Western 'nuclear' model. The house form throughout the islands was a low building of hardwood poles lashed together and thatched with pandanus or palm leaves. The sloped gables of the roof reached all the way or nearly to the ground (Coiffier 1988: 141–151). As in much of Oceania, the house is not used for much besides sleeping or as a shelter during bad weather. Most of everyday life takes place outdoors in the gardens and shared public areas between houses. Turner (1861: 84–85), one of the first missionaries to Tanna, estimated that a typical village on that island had eight to ten families, each family consisting of an average of ten people across multiple generations. Southern Vanuatu is primarily patrilineal and patrilocal, with brides relocating to their husband's home village. Chiefly titles passed from father to son but could be contested by political rivals. Women could also own and pass to their children garden plots that were part of the networked landscape.

The third layer vivifying these landscapes are the men's spaces. On Tanna, Aniwa, and Futuna these take the form of open spaces used in the afternoons and evenings to drink kava. Men have the right to drink at multiple places, and groups of villages will decide on a 'home' kava site linking allied families and communities by customary 'roads.' During ceremonies such as weddings or feasts, the men's spaces (called *imwarim* or *yimwayim* on Tanna, and *marae* on Futuna and Aniwa) are opened up for gift exchanges, singing, and dancing (Brunton 1989: 130–138; Lindstrom 1996). On Erromango the men's space takes the form of a large house called the *siman lo*, which is used as a men's eating house, sleeping place for single men, and also an important site of political debate and decision making (Humphreys 1926: 156–158; Naupa 2011: 26–30). Public, competitive feasts (*nisekar*) including the construction of monumental displays of produce from Erromangan gardens (*nevsem*) were another element of the ritual landscape (Humphreys 1926: 180–182; Naupa 2011: 30–32; Robertson 1902: 390–391). On both Tanna and Erromango, feasting was a mixed-gender affair, with men and women gathering in large numbers to form alliances and for younger adults to seek spouses from neighbouring villages.

In general, relationships between men and women were unequal, with men exclusively holding the highest chiefly titles in these ranked societies. There were, however, a class of female chiefs in Erromango (*Nasimnalan*; Humphreys 1926: 126). On Tanna, *Iowhanan* was a female title for the woman responsible for initiating newly circumcised young men into 'the mysteries of sexual intercourse' (Humphreys 1926: 46). That this service was paid for in the ultimate exchange medium – pigs – from the families of the young men indicates this was a valued position. The *Iowhanan* were highly respected and lived a normal family life after their period of service was completed (Humphreys 1926: 45–46). Female chiefship may have ended up underemphasised after the missionaries interfered in island politics. In my experiences there are certainly women who hold considerable political influence in their villages in contemporary southern Vanuatu despite not holding chiefly titles. There is no reason to believe this wasn't also the case historically.

Men could have multiple wives, though this was generally only a privilege of those of high rank. Missionaries of course saw polygyny as another sign of the degraded nature of the 'heathens', though Turner (1861: 86) did not perceive the women of Tanna as particularly oppressed. Perhaps compared to the women of Britain they did not appear so. Humphreys (1926: 17) suggests that polygyny resulted in a lack of suitable wives among young men because the older chiefs would monopolise the younger women. As a result, younger men were often married to relatively older widows. Naupa (2011: 62–64), herself an

Erromangan woman, turns this logic on its head, suggesting the structure of marrying younger women to older men and younger men to older women allowed the more experienced spouse to teach the other the traditional family roles and appropriate gender relationships. Children were of course loved and cared for, representing both the continuation of the family and the future backbone of the society's gardeners, fishers, magicians, and orators (Naupa 2011: 34; Turner 1861: 87).

When missionaries began arriving in the southern New Hebrides in the 1840s, one gender system met another. The Western tradition of family and gender have been a matter for critical analysis for some time (e.g. Engels 1990[1884]), including from archaeological perspectives (Spencer-Wood 2010). The Western, capitalist family was generally patriarchal, with a male head of household and a wife, children, and in some cases other dependents, such as domestic staff, tenants, or gardeners, who were expected to be subservient to some degree to the will of the father. The male was expected to support the family through work that took place outside of the home, though of course there was significant variation in the organisation of domestic and wage labour between different social classes and in different colonial contexts, including interethnic contexts (Lightfoot *et al.* 1998; Voss 2008a, 2008b). Missionary families generally followed a somewhat idealised middle class model, with the male missionary charged with the public work of converting 'heathens', while the wife managed the domestic sphere and raised the children (Flexner 2016; Middleton 2007). The daily round of domestic maintenance activities including sewing, cleaning, and bread-baking were the missionary wife's responsibility. In the mission encounter these domestic activities and outlooks were to be taught to female converts, often adding an educational role to the wife's duties (Middleton 2008: 177–188; Lydon 2009: 138–140). Sewing was a dual activity, simultaneously encouraging and reinforcing particular labour patterns, and producing the clothes to dress the 'naked' bodies of Islander converts in Western-style garments (Lawson 2001). Items related to sewing were relatively rare in mission assemblages from Tanna and Erromango, though such objects were recovered from all of the excavated mission houses (Table 1).

The mission encounter in reality did not exactly match an ideal of male activity and female domesticity. Missionary women were often just as exposed to the external realities of island life, conflict, and conversion. In some cases, the dangerous, seductive nature of experiencing life among the near-naked islanders was turned inwards, as missionary wives' repressed sexualities became an object of self-flagellation (Adams 1984: 99–100). In other cases, missionary wives developed close relationships with both male and female natives, and were integrated into island society, as was the case for Agnes Watt in Tanna (Watt 1896; Lindstrom 2013).

Missionaries were appalled at the labour conditions of Melanesian women, who were perceived as hardly better off than 'beasts of burden' (missionary wife Charlotte Geddie, quoted in Jolly 1992: 31), not only doing all of the domestic work but also the bulk of the gardening activities. It was the hard physical labour of gardening that concerned the missionaries; domestic drudgery was simply a woman's natural purview. While these observations are deeply coloured by the colonial perspective of the missionaries, there is some evidence that post-conversion on Aneityum female labour in fact decreased as the men took on a larger share of work in the gardens (Spriggs 1993).

GENDERING INDIGENOUS LANDSCAPES

Missionaries typically more or less explicitly set apart mission space in the southern New Hebrides, creating a 'civilised' enclave in the 'savage' islands in which they found themselves. This was particularly marked from the 1860s onwards in Tanna and Erromango, where missionaries felt threatened because of previous events where their forerunners had been killed or chased off the islands (Miller 1978, 1981). As Middleton (2003) found at Te Puna, mission landscapes in the New Hebrides were deeply embedded within the existing Melanesian cultural landscapes. At Kwamera, Tanna the missionaries were settled on a black sand dune overlooking the sea that had previously been used for human burials. Contact with the *ierehma* (spirits) of these burials was potentially dangerous, and it is possible this perilous space was intentionally gifted to the newcomers (Flexner and Willie 2015). On Aniwa, the Paton family was

Table 1. *Excavated mission sites from southern Vanuatu.*

Site Name	Location	Features	Years
George Gordon Mission	Dillon's Bay, Erromango	Mission house, martyr landscape	1856–1861
James Gordon Mission	Potnuma, Erromango	Mission house, martyr landscape	1868–1872
Robertson Mission	Dillon's Bay, Erromango	Mission house, stone walls, church, storage building	1872–1904
Imua Mission	Kwamera, Tanna	Mission house	1860–1862
Watt Mission	Kwamera, Tanna	Mission house, church, storage, printing house	1869–1894
Paton Mission	Imarae, Aniwa	Mission house, churches, orphanage	1866–1903
Geddie Mission	Anelcauhat, Aneityum	Mission house, church, cemetery	1848–1900s

settled in the 'poisonous' sacred space of the sea snake god *Tagaro*. When Paton not only survived, but successfully dug a freshwater well in the area, a mass conversion followed (Paton 1907 vol. 2: 176–192).

The social construction of mission space, and the surrounding 'native' space, was not 'masculine' or 'feminine' in any simple way. Within the mission landscape, spatial organisation reflected a certain kind of conservative European family structure. The paternal male missionary was not only the head of his actual family unit, but also the indigenous Christian converts who in some cases worked as servants for the missionary family. Early converts as well as missionaries were often perceived as threatened or subject to actual violence early in the mission encounter (e.g. Robertson 1902: 195–196, 315–318; Turner 1861: 26–29; Watt 1896: 160–161). Early relationships between missionaries and Melanesians before the 1890s were usually on relatively equal terms, with both missionary men and local chiefs exercising 'power to' (Spencer-Wood 2010) create political and spiritual enmities and partnerships. Missionary wives often exercised a kind of 'power with' their husbands in contributing both to domestic maintenance activities and the active work of conversion, especially with local women and men with whom they sometimes formed close friendships (Lindstrom 2013).

Missionary settlement patterns in the New Hebrides became more elaborate through time. Early mission settlements often consisted of a single house with lathe and plaster walls and a thatched roof, and a small church building usually constructed of local materials. Over time these buildings would be replaced or enhanced with larger structures of stone and mortar and a more specialised landscape of functionally discrete buildings. The most elaborate early mission settlement was John Geddie's establishment at Anelcauhat, Aneityum. By the 1850s it included a massive lime mortar mission house, a house for the mission's printing press, and a monumental lime mortar church for the local congregation (Flexner and Spriggs 2015: 197–198; Zubrzycka *et al.* 2018). Geddie further extended missionary influence on the island by planting 'a school in every district' (Spriggs 1985), where again education would have included propagating Christian and British ideology about gender roles.

By the 1880s, missionaries on Tanna and Erromango began constructing similarly elaborate compounds. Robertson built a complex at Dillon's Bay, Erromango (now called Williams' Bay) that included a large Georgian pile stone and mortar house, a prefabricated timber church from Sydney, and a storehouse for calico and other trade goods, all of which were surrounded by walls made of rounded basalt boulders from the nearby river mouth (Flexner 2016: 52–57). The Watts at Kwamera, Tanna, built a large stone and mortar house, connected timber church, and outbuildings including a printing house, storage shed, chicken coop, and cookhouse (Flexner 2016: 98–99). Missionaries often emphasised the 'pure white' lime whitewash used to paint their buildings (Watt 1896: 83) which would have further distinguished the 'civilised' mission spaces from the 'heathen' buildings made of natural materials from the forest (Mills 2009). At Imarae, Aniwa, Paton constructed a monumental compound following the mass conversion of the population. The mission landscape included a massive lime mortar house, an orphanage for children whose parents had died in one of the many epidemics affecting the island, and a series of churches, including an imported prefabricated timber structure (Figure 2).

Within these increasingly elaborate landscapes there were marked gendered spaces. The missionary and (usually male) Islander church elders had a special place at the pulpit, offering dramatic sermons, or the wife had her place in the house and kitchen. These simple binaries fall somewhat flat in practice. Missionary woman's work was equally public, involving building relationships with potential converts (Watt 1896: 78–82); bargaining with local people to secure produce for the family's table (Watt 1896: 83–84); and in many cases accompanying the husband during itinerant mission work visiting neighbouring villages and islands (Watt 1896: 226–238). Single male missionaries, such as James Gordon on Erromango would have been responsible for many of the maintenance activities in their own daily lives (Flexner 2016: 36–51).

And what of the 'dark bush' that lay beyond the mission fences, moving into Melanesian gardens and the deep forests of surrounding mountains and valleys? Here too it might be tempting to construct a simple male, culture, order/female, nature, disorder dichotomy for the missionaries' perspective. It could be argued that this dichotomy emerges from a Western, and particularly British, ideological structure for imagining colonised spaces (Gilbert 2004). But Melanesian reality often confounds the colonial imagination. One of the important elements of gardens throughout southern Vanuatu is, and was the productive magic that causes the tubers and vegetables to grow in abundance in the rich volcanic soils and tropical climate (Bonnemaison 1991). Even today the magic stones of Tanna continue to power people's gardens while resource *tabus* ensure that some 'wild' spaces are maintained in order for life on the island to be sustained for future generations (Flexner *et al.* 2018b). The magic stones are exclusively a male prerogative, but as with so many things in practice the gardens were a symbiosis. Men's magic and female labour – which also had its elements of magic expressed, for example, in dance – made the gardens work (Bonnemaison 2001; Lindstrom 1996).

While the church remains a key sacred space on Sundays in south Vanuatu (and Saturdays for subsequent converts including Southern Day Adventists and Mormons), the *marae*, *imwarim*, and *siman lo*, traditional gendered spaces for dancing and drinking kava, also remain central places in the inhabited landscapes of these islands. People in the southern New Hebrides were remarkably creative in adapting Christianity to their own purposes while also

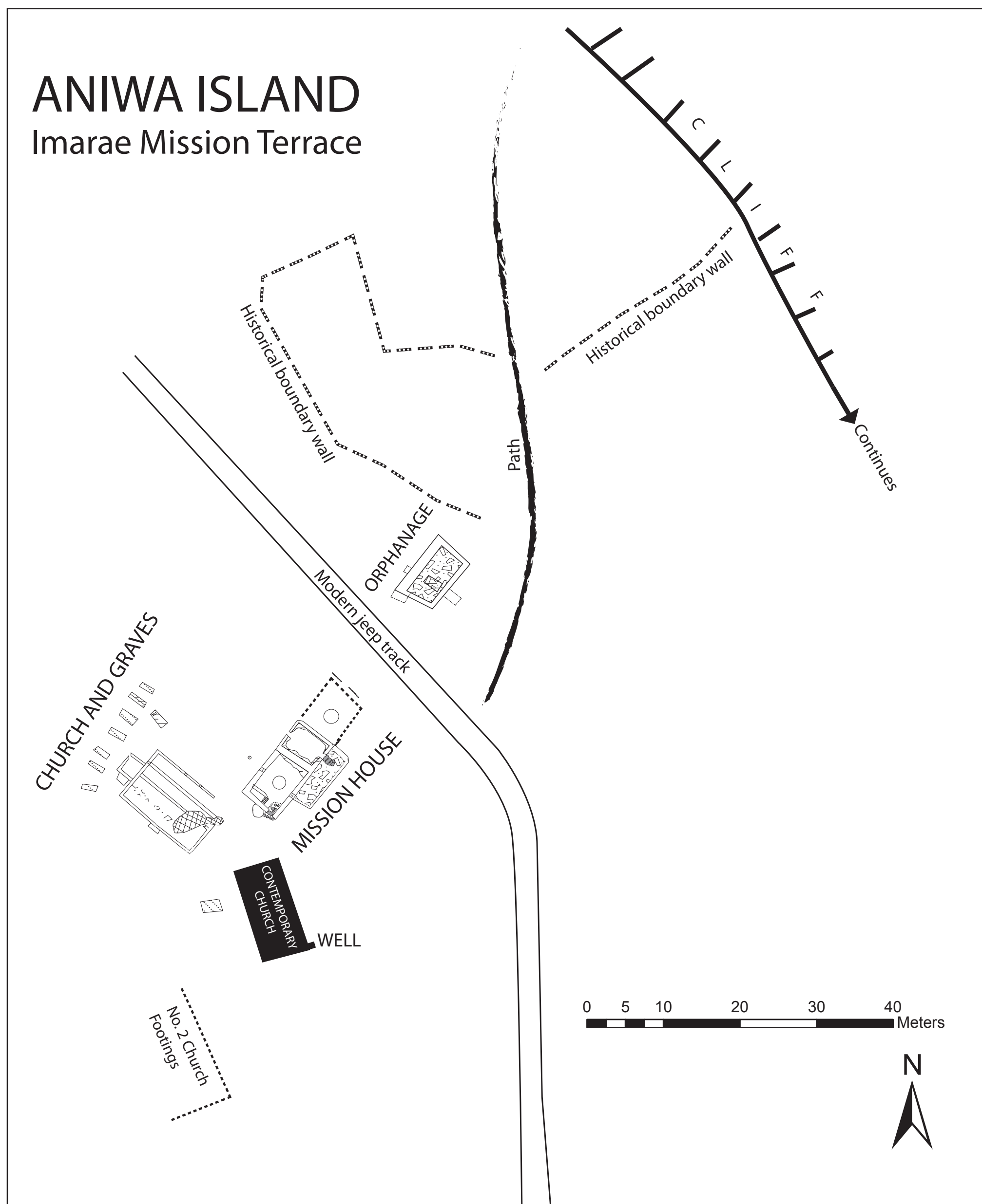

Figure 2. John G. Paton's mission station at Imarae, Aniwa.

maintaining *kastom*. For missionaries these were both physically and spiritually dangerous grounds, and the persistence of spaces that follow an indigenous, rather than colonial, order is a testament to the flexibility and resilience of *kastom* (Flexner 2016: 159–160).

THE DOMESTIC SPHERE AND MATERIAL CULTURE

Domestic space was theoretically more clearly gendered as the domain of the missionary wife, who was charged with the everyday running of the household. Scholars from Max Weber (2002[1905]) onwards have noted the importance of the clean, respectable middle class home to Protestant Christians, and it was generally assumed that it was the duty of the woman of the house to maintain such a space. Or was it? Besides examples of single male missionaries, such as James Gordon at Potnuma, Erromango, the mission house could equally serve as a cabinet of curiosities, either the missionary family's display of local artefacts and natural wonders (Smith 2005: 272–274), or as a museum of European consumer goods to entice potential converts (Watt 1896: 81–82).

The archaeological remains from mission houses, as in other colonial households, do not divide easily into 'male' or 'female' objects (Voss 2008a). For the most part, the artefacts are a reflection of shared experiences within the realm of day to day life for the missionary families, their converts, and visitors. These include the daily rituals

surrounding food and drink, reflected by large amounts of refined white ceramic dishes, glass bottles relating to alcohol consumption as well as medicines, and remains of meals including large amounts of shellfish as well as microscopic plant remains (Flexner 2016: 193–203; Flexner *et al.* 2019). As suggested above, for the missionaries as well as the indigenous population, the apparent division between male and female is undermined by the need for mutual aid, Spencer-Wood's (2010) 'power with', in the remote colonial frontier. Women equally contributed to using material culture to define the relationships in colonial society (Hayes 2014: 3–4; Wall 1999). Mutual aid was a feature within the missionary families, and their reliance on local people to some degree for food and protection, especially in the early years when missionaries were still establishing footholds in the islands.

Gender was of course neither monolithic nor isolated from other facets of identity. Age is another key part of the life-cycle (see Baxter 2008). As Middleton (2008: 169–170) has noted for Te Puna, it can be remarkably difficult to find material evidence for children in early mission sites in Oceania, despite ample evidence for the presence of the missionaries' own children, and children from the indigenous communities of converts. One of the most common classes of artefacts found in and around mission sites relating to children are objects relating to literacy, such as slate pencil fragments. For Protestant missionaries a personal relationship with Scripture was an important element of 'true' conversion, thus students had to learn to read and write, and translation of the Bible into local languages was one of the early priorities. Adults as well as children received this type of education during the process of conversion. In other cases, less marked objects might still offer insights into missionary families' relationships to local children. Objects like fishhooks and glass trade beads were also used to reward school attendance at Te Puna and elsewhere.

A number of children's objects were recovered from mission sites throughout southern Vanuatu. Slate pencils and writing slates were present across most of the excavated mission houses in southern Vanuatu. At James Gordon's mission house at Potnuma, Erromango, 16 slate pencil fragments were recovered, which is the largest number from the Tanna and Erromango mission sites (Figure 3). Other children's objects included a child's moralising tea-

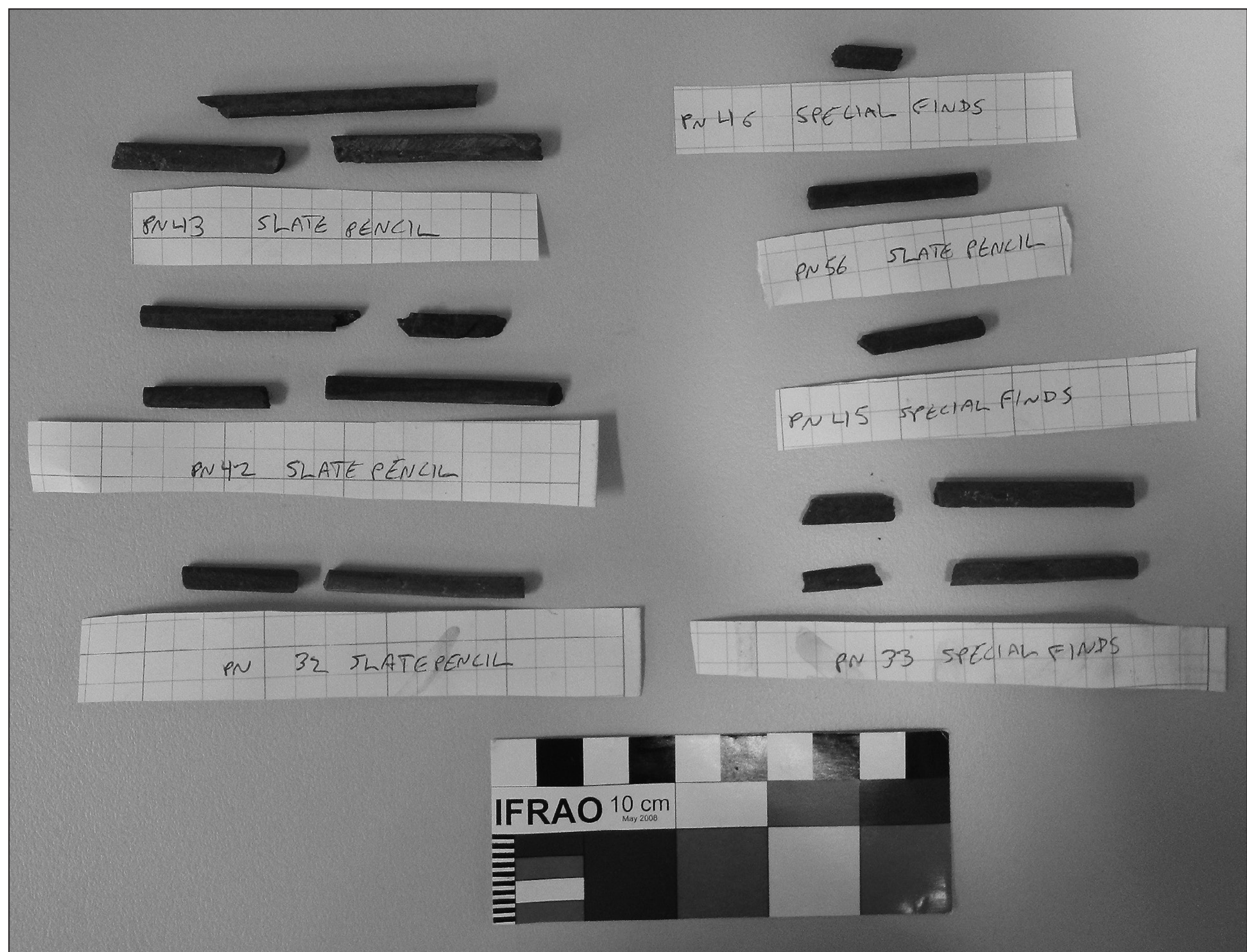

Figure 3. Slate pencil fragments from James Gordon's mission house, Potnuma, Erromango.

ware, part of a set including the names of the four gospels, and a porcelain sheep figurine from Imua, Tanna (Flexner 2016: 87–90). Lydon (2009: 138–139) has suggested that dolls and other toys were used to introduce indigenous children to Western expectations of domestic roles, though such objects could be interpreted quite differently by the children themselves. At the Watts' mission house in Kwamera, Tanna, there is an enormous *Tridacna* (giant clam) shell that apparently served as a baptismal font as well as a bath for their babies. Missionary child graves are a common feature of mission landscapes as young children often succumbed to tropical diseases such as malaria. Childhood illness is another under-theorised aspect of the life experience in mission families, but is beyond the scope of this paper.

Artefacts from field sites are limited by taphonomic conditions, which are not conducive to the preservation of organic materials. Gendered objects in ethnographic collections preserve indigenous material culture from the time of missionary encounters, much of which was collected by the missionaries themselves (Flexner 2016: 130–158). Again it would be unwise to project simple 'male/female' dichotomies based on Western assumptions onto these objects. When asked to collect some objects that could illustrate 'the life of the female', missionary Joseph Annand responded, 'Of course among these people the life of the two sexes are so interwoven in their work, and the things distinctively female are so few that I fear we can not do much to carry out your idea.' (Smith 2005: 269).

Despite Annand's pessimism, missionary collectors did seek to represent the objects of men, women, and children. On Erromango, the *Nasimnalan* would wear layers of billowing decorated pandanus skirts, sometimes up to 20 to 30 at once. Missionary H.A. Robinson (1902: 326–327) frames the transition from the *numplat*, skirts, to missionary-style dresses in terms of male preference: the men complained that the calico dresses made their wives look too slim. Robertson (1902: 366–367) wrote appreciatively of women's dress on Erromango, as opposed to men's apparel (or lack thereof). His statements on the topic tell us as much about missionary bias and possibly quite un-Christian desires translated and moralised in terms that would have been palatable for Western audiences reading missionary literature (see also Lawson 2001).There are many *numplat* represented in Presbyterian collections from the New Hebrides now located in Canadian and Scottish museums (Flexner 2016: 139–142, 147, 155). Museums Glasgow (1897.143du) and National Museum of Scotland (A1890.475) each hold a 'mourning dress' of cycad palm ferns from Tanna that a widow would have worn after her husband's passing to the ancestral realm. Royal Ontario Museum (HB109) holds a shorter grass skirt that would have been worn by a child or unmarried adolescent.

Other objects of personal adornment, such as pendants of stone and shell (Haddow *et al*. 2018) include items worn to signify chiefly status and rank. Chiefly ranks were often gendered and materialised in specific ways. For example the *kweriya* hawks' feather headdress was the sole prerogative of male *Yeremwanu* from Tanna (Bonnemaison 1994: 146–148; Guiart 1956: 83–85). The *Iowhanan* wore special turtle shell ornaments (Humphreys 1926: 45) which signified the high status of these female specialists as turtle shell was among the highest valued materials for personal adornment (Haddow *et al*. 2018: 102). One of the more poignant kinds of 'object' from Tanna are the plaited braids that young men wear during periods of initiation and ceremony and associated paraphernalia such as wooden 'pillows' which allow the young men to sleep without damaging their coiffure (Flexner 2016: 141, 148, 156). The plaited hair is significant as hair is often shaved mourning periods, and may have ended up in missionary collectors' possession during such an event. The presence of objects like different types of skirts, ornaments, and hairstyles suggest that missionary collectors did indeed seek to represent both gender and different stages of the life cycle in their collections.

CONCLUSIONS

Gender was one of the structuring elements of missionary encounters in the Pacific, shaping colonial relationships both within missionary families, and relationships with potential converts (Jolly and Macintyre, eds. 1989; Middleton 2007). As Spencer-Wood (2001, 2010) notes, the idea of power operating in some kind of monolithic way in relation to gendered experience is not tenable as much of everyday life depended on other factors, including age, class, marital status, race, and so on. Missionaries relied on the maintenance activities (Monton-Subias and Hernando 2018) of local gardeners, magical specialists, and family leaders of both male and female gender as productive local gardens fed the mission family. At the same time, missionaries strove to transform the gendering of these activities by relieving the women of heavy gardening duties, redirecting labour towards sewing, housekeeping, and cooking.

One of the interesting things that Pacific missions offer in relation to this discussion are the stresses and limitations on 'traditional' gender roles in what were quite remote areas of the colonial fringe. Missionary families had to find ways to work while remaining quite far from the industrial consumer trade networks of the modern world. Further, they had to carry out their work within contexts of complex and evolving gender relationships among extant communities of Pacific Islanders. What emerges in this analysis is a picture of mutual dependence, both within the mission family and between missionaries and islanders, that transformed somewhat rigid expectations about gender roles in these situations. Mission archaeology in the Pacific is currently largely focused on British, Protestant missionary families and their households. Comparisons with the 'institutional' missions of Australia (Middleton 2010; Sutton 2003) or the more gender-segregated Catholic missions in places like French Polynesia (Lagarde *et al*.

2020) and Micronesia (Monton-Subias *et al*. 2020) should prove a fruitful avenue for expanding research on this topic.

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