

The Continuation of the ‘Primitive’ Trope:

An Examination of an Ongoing Legacy

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ABSTRACT

It is largely accepted that the term ‘primitive’ is no longer appropriate to use- whether in academia or in public life. The question has been raised however (Kuper 2005), of whether the ‘primitive trope’ continues to exist today, but in altered forms. To answer this question, it is crucial to understand the historical context of the development of the trope, the consequences of its perpetuation, and the spaces in which it is evidently still occurring.

Through a mixture of interviews, archival research and literature studies, this thesis examines the changing nature of the ‘primitive trope’, specifically in how it has evolved within academic scholarship and in museum spaces. It questions classification practices within both of these fields, and queries the ramifications of supposedly ‘unbiased’ labels. Further, in line with decolonisation scholarship, this thesis seeks to critique current practices of ethnoarchaeology and history-writing disciplines. This project therefore explores the effect of connecting contemporary societies and their way of life with the prehistoric past. By questioning linear narratives of time based on an increasing trajectory of development, the thesis highlights how contemporary communities are often located ‘outside of time’. My thesis does so with a focus on West Papuan and Papuan material culture and its representation given the centrality of material culture to categorisations of the past and ideas surrounding development.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Jessica Uanna Binet

24th June 2022

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Dear Examiner,

Many of our HDR candidates have had to make changes to their research due to the impact of COVID-19. Below you will find a statement from the candidate, approved by their Supervisory Panel, that indicates how their original research plan has been affected by COVID-19 restrictions. Relevant ongoing restrictions in place caused by COVID-19 will also be detailed by the candidate.

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Thesis Title: The Continuation of the Primitive Trope

Candidate Name: Jessica Binet

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Statement:

This research had originally planned to examine and compare physical exhibition spaces in museums. I had also planned to interview the curators of these exhibitions whilst physically engaging with the space to understand exhibition design processes. The lockdowns in Sydney, caused by the Covid-19 outbreak, made this impossible. As such, this thesis now examines digital collections. Interviews were also planned to take place with individuals in Papua New Guinea, however due to the severity of the outbreak there and the responsibilities of the participants, these interviews could not proceed either.

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INTRODUCTION

The term ‘primitive’ has a long and fraught history that is intertwined with colonialism and imperialism. It is a categorisation inextricably linked to the development of anthropology as a discipline. Indeed, Adam Kuper argues that anthropology is responsible for the creation of so-called ‘primitive society’ and therefore has a duty to make amends. In 1988, he published *The Invention of the Primitive* where he suggested the term must be rendered obsolete. In a revised edition published in 2005, he concluded “this was a vain hope” (Kuper 2005, xi). Whilst the term ‘primitive’ may have fallen out of favour in many academic circles, the inferences and lifeways it historically encompassed continue to be implicated in modern scholarship and broader society. Publications from the 1960’s onward critique the concept of a ‘primitive society’ as myth; a fictitious creation of the social anthropology discipline (Hsu 1964; Leach 1982; Kuper 1988, 2005). Despite this, euphemisms such as “pre-industrial”, “pre-literature”, “tribal”, “traditional”, ‘hunter-gatherer’, and even “indigenous” perpetuate the ‘primitive society’ categorisation (Hallpike 1992; Suzman [in Kuper] 2003). This project aims to bring to light how material culture from the Pacific is represented and classified in ways that reflect the primitive trope. In doing so, this project makes clear where change is needed to truly render the category obsolete.

Analysis of classification efforts within digital collections, alongside a survey of contemporary archaeological and anthropological literature reveals that despite recent trends and claims of decolonisation, the primitive trope is alive and well. Interviews with curators at two Sydney museums will reveal the state of decolonising efforts at their respective institutions. In doing so, I examine current classification practices (based on historical legacies), and the conflation of specific and deliberate temporal boundaries between the *longue durée* and the contemporary ethnographic present. I demonstrate how these continue to perpetuate the existence of the primitive trope in both popular and scholarly thought, and argue for the need to alter representations and classifications of material culture. This research falls within a current trend of exposing the oppressive logic of colonial modernity and its use of hierarchical dichotomies and categorical logic (Lugones 2007; 2010). It is

important to expose these dichotomies and logics that they are central to modern, colonial, and capitalist thinking, which will continue unless disrupted.

The first chapter will introduce the ‘primitive’ trope as exemplified by Lewis Henry Morgan’s *Ancient Society*. It will outline the key characteristics that manifested materially in the identification and classification of historically ‘primitive’ societies. In doing so, this chapter highlights the cultural embeddedness of classificatory language and its intrinsic link with material culture. By drawing on Michel Foucault, this chapter also questions the unequal power relations embodied by classificatory language. This thesis is therefore post-structuralist, as well as decolonial in its attempt to highlight the perpetuation of oppressive, colonial structures within academic and museological spaces. By surveying contemporary anthropological and archaeological literature, and identifying the context of euphemisms such as “traditional”, and “tribal”, this chapter clearly outlines the underlying colonial constructions of classification systems. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to answer Foucault’s question in relation to the ‘primitive’: “on what ‘table’, according to what grid of identities, similitudes, analogies, have we become accustomed to sort out so many different and similar things?” (Foucault 1971, p. xxi).

The second chapter explores the historic connection between ethnoarchaeological methodology and the perpetuation of the ‘primitive’ into the present. This chapter highlights the connection between characterisations and models of history, and the continuation of ‘primitive’ ideals. The use of Michael Jackson’s intersubjectivity (2017), Henri Bergson’s duration (1908), and Martin Heidegger’s da-sein (1953) are used to reconceptualise a model of history that is not based on linearity. Instead of conceptualising history as a chronological sequence of disembodied events, history is perceived as an entangled and embodied entity, in which prehistory becomes part of the present. In doing so, primitivity is not relegated to the past and is not conceptualised as a remnant of the origins of humanity. Mark Rifkin (2017) highlights the tendency of settler cultures to locate indigenous populations outside of time by creating dichotomies between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ life. In this way, indigenous populations are given a tangential history that is separated from their coloniser counterparts, and that is grounded in comparison to the past. Bergson’s duration will be

used in conjunction with Tim Ingold (2015; 2021) to argue that humans, as *becomings* rather than beings, are in a constant state of co-creation that not only invalidates a stratigraphic perception of a buried and distinct past, but places the onus of the perpetuation of the primitive categorisation into the everyday, intersubjective interactions of people. As such, this chapter offers a path forward to more inclusive and diverse representations of the past, that will in turn, provide better representations and understandings of contemporary people groups who are relegated to the past, or disqualified from the future.

Chapter Three offers an analysis of the decolonisation efforts occurring in collections of the Australian Museum and the Chau Chak Wing Museum in Sydney, Australia. It utilises Deborah Bird Rose's (1996) 'deep colonising', to identify the deeply embedded processes in collections management that serve to continue colonial legacies in institutions otherwise undergoing decolonisation. Objects in the Australian Museum's online collections are offered as examples of a contemporary practice that sees the word 'primitive' replaced with labels such as 'traditional'. This chapter therefore seeks to interrogate the legacy of historic classification and museological practices. Interviews with Dr Jude Philp and Dr Jenny Newell frame the chapter, and complement the work of Trish Luker (2017) emphasising the need for co-creation of exhibitions and collections.

In the final part of this thesis, I will summarise and conclude that the primitive trope remains prominent as a sometimes concealed, but omnipresent category and logic in both academic and popular circles. In engaging with decolonising theories, the thesis offers an alternate categorisation of history, that in turn, will remove value judgement from the past, and therefore its application to the present. By analysing the areas in which the primitive trope is perpetuated, this thesis suggests where change needs to occur for the trope to be made obsolete, at last.

CHAPTER ONE

CLASSIFICATION and the PRIMITIVE TROPE

“To classify is human” (Bowker and Star 2000, 3). We process our world through categories that we create. Often these categorisations are invisible (Bowker and Star 2000, 3). For example, the way we separate our clothes into drawers, or how we colour-code our emails and textbooks. Whilst invisible, classifications are deeply imbricated into every mundane, or extraordinary action in our lives (Bowker and Star 2000, 3). Often, it is the bureaucratic, the formal, the taught, or the educational categories that we can more easily identify, if not always question (Bowker and Star 2000, 3). Far from a merely abstract entity however, classification holds a heavy bearing on the actions and material world of individuals, groups, and nations. Whether they construct reality or merely reflect it, words hold power. For centuries social scientists have debated the role of language in experiencing, constructing, and representing our worlds. Regardless of this debate, there are measurable and tangible consequences of the entangled relationship between language and power. These consequences increase exponentially when this power imbalance is located within knowledge-producing sectors of society. The public engage with sanctioned information through public intellectuals and educational institutions. Through these sources, the public are exposed to state-endorsed knowledge that informs current opinion. The classification practices of academic scholarship and the museum sector therefore hold paramount ramifications for the underlying consciousness of public life and the day-to-day interactions of contemporary populations. By continuing to use categories such as ‘primitive’, ‘traditional’ and ‘hunter-gatherer’, otherness and difference is reinforced in ways that continue to place people from certain areas of the world in positions of inferiority.

A search of Macquarie University’s Database *Multisearch* for any key term results in the program offering a list of filters, with one subsection sorting search results by ‘subject’. This is often a useful tool for researchers in grouping resources with shared subject designations. A search for the term ‘ethnography’ however, returns a filter of ‘primitive societies’. For this to occur, articles must be

indexed with 'primitive societies' as a subject. Closer interrogation reveals that even articles published in leading journals between 2018 and 2021 are still being grouped within and labelled with this classification. In subsequent searches of the additional subject tags of these articles, other associations become clear. The terms 'cultural evolution', 'hunter-gatherers', 'stone age', 'natural history', 'neolithic', and 'human condition' all appear on articles tagged with the subject of 'primitive societies'. A simple key term search for 'primitive societies', filtered to resources created between 2016-2023, returns 96,286 results. Whilst some of these resources appear as a result of reference lists attributing information to 19th and 20th century anthropological and archaeological works, it is evident that representations of communities across the globe continue to be identified in terms of the primitive trope.

This endurance of the primitive trope in current times of decolonisation becomes apparent when using the search terms of "primitive", "tribal", "anthropology" and "pacific", a search that generated 20 articles published in 2021. 'Primitive' was mostly used in reference to 19th century work produced by anthropologists such as Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski. In many cases the use of the word 'traditional' was in reference to what the authors or participants deemed an authentic representation of culture; that is, bounded, ahistorical, timeless representations that mirror the historical descriptions of 'primitive' societies. In other cases, the term was referring to a practice or place that could easily have been described as 'historic'. A separation therefore occurred between historical events and places from European or 'western' backgrounds which were considered part of official histories, and traditional events and places which belonged to specific groups residing outside of this history. 14 references to 'primitive' were made that stood outside of reference lists or quotations from 19th century works. In each case, the word was used to represent a contrast to a 'civilised', 'modern' or 'scientific' entity. The word 'tribal' was used mostly in reference to government legislation, however there are some instances where it described a social organisation or group boundaries. One interesting contrast was made that highlights the metonymous nature of the three words in question. The article contrasted and separated "tribal, rural, and urban communities", highlighting the

perspective of the incommensurability of ‘tribal’ lifeways with modern, urban spaces (Chakrabarti 2021, 146).

This shows the extent to which the category of the ‘primitive’ is still actively deployed in academia, despite current trends of decolonisation in both social sciences and museum spaces. This chapter will unravel the intertwinement of classification systems and power, focusing on how the ‘primitive trope’ has developed throughout history. Using the case of West Papua, this chapter highlights how the continuation of this trope impacts local communities. In doing so, it will also become clear that employing the primitive trope serves as a device of political power and control by governing bodies to aid the subjugation and marginalisation of particular people and communities.

Classification and Power

Classification has been at the heart of the anthropology discipline since its inception, and is particularly entwined with the discipline’s professionalisation (Pels 2021, 2). The foundation of anthropology was built on the “collective representations” or “cultures” that arose as conglomerations of “mid-19th-century scientific raci[st]” classifications (Pels 2021, 2). Classification is arguably then, the “product of anthropology’s sedimentation of colonial connections” (Pels 2021, 3). Pels correctly suggests that “anthropological science helped turn ‘social discriminations’ of European colonialism into the global forms of domination that endure today (Pels 2021, p. 5; Quijano, 2007 [1992]: 168, 170). Most classifications found in academia, museum settings, and government institutions are epistemic positions that have been inherited from colonialism, and are “the most general form of domination in the world today” (Quijano 2007 [1992], 170). This is due to the way we make “temporal dichotomies congruent with historically prior classifications of race and ethnicity, which then serves to perpetuate structural discrimination (Pels 2021, 15). Indeed “classificatory interventions differ radically across power differences, especially when we compare those who actively construct the classification with those who suffer its effects in their lives” (Pels 2021, 10). These classifications are overwhelmingly created by products of a white, western system. Without critical reflection and change, colonial categories continue to exist, whether

overt, or as new euphemisms. This consequently ensures that colonial power imbalances endure and continue to impact the lives of Indigenous and First Nations populations across the globe.

Émile Durkheim's and Marcel Mauss' respective works *The Division of Labour in Society* (1964 [1893]) and *The Gift* (1990 [1925]) represent a shift in anthropology from a focus on the collection of objects and material culture for 'natural history', toward the study of societies (Pels 2021, 5). In these origins of classification, the dichotomy arose between the "confused primitive and the knowledgeable modern" (Pels 2021, 6). The categories of the Western world were "current", whereas those of the objects' owners were "confused" (Pels 2021, 8). From the very beginning then, ethnocentric understandings of superiority laid the foundation for social classifications. Mauss and Durkheim highlight the presence of classificatory systems within First Nations Australian communities. They describe the basis of these systems as social categories, yet designate them as part of the 'genesis' of the classificatory system rather than a unique, whole and evolved system in itself (Durkheim and Mauss, 1963 [1903], 82). Indeed 'social affectivity' and close coordinated groups became a key characteristic of the primitive trope (Pels 2021, 6). Peter Pels explores the way classification systems act as nominalist, in that they endeavour to describe human difference as it appears in reality, an endeavour that is inevitably futile (Pels 2021, 8). Classification systems are perceived as positivist, when in truth, the systems themselves can cause difference rather than merely describe it (Pels 2021, 8). As Foucault argued, reality is described in an "analysis based on terms of identity and difference" where comparison becomes a function of order (Foucault 1971, 60). In this way, order is not created by the comparison, but "according to the order laid down by thought, progressing naturally from the simple to the complex" (Foucault 1971, 60). The episteme of Western culture therefore is based on a comparative method ordered by a progression from simple to complex. This is crucial to understand, as Foucault suggests that "language must be studied as a thing in nature", that is, that it is not neutral, nor above reality (Foucault 1971, 39). Understanding the context, or 'nature' from which classifications arise therefore serves to understand the assumption and moral dimensions imbued in their meanings. In this way, classifications can become artefacts

themselves, laden with moral attachments that reflect the values of the time in which they were created, and of the time in which they are still utilised.

Foucault describes that society is at war “not between races”, but “by a race that is portrayed as the one true race, the race that holds power and is entitled to define the norm, and against those who deviate the norm, against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage” (Foucault 1976 [2005], 61). In this instance, there is a controlling power, and those who fall outside of the bounds of this controlling group’s norm. In the case of colonial contexts, there is a clear separation of power between the coloniser and the colonised, revolving particularly around race. Narratives surrounding the ‘primitive’ are attempts to classify and define race through difference, in a way that gives power to colonisers. Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard highlight the intersections of race and governance in Greater Oceania, exploring how civilisation and race controlled the ranking of colonial subjects (Douglas and Ballard 2012, 247). Their work elucidates the colonial order and ranking (from simple, or, primitive to more complex) that was projected on local cultures, communities, and people. It also highlights the intimate connection between classification and power. Not only are those behaviours that reside outside of the norm of the dominant power historically described as ‘primitive’, typologies in themselves, which shape how we perceive the world, are exercises in power. Foucault maintains that institutions, through their practice and physical forms, create the conditions for “certain kinds of power and knowledge” (Foucault 1991; Mohan and Rodgers 2021, 6). Foucault also stipulates that to gain ‘mastery’ over an element of society, it is first necessary to “subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it...and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present” (Foucault 1978, 17). The primitive trope explored in this chapter, demonstrates how First Nations and Indigenous populations across the globe have been controlled by their representations in language, including through the colonial and imperialist labels that have been (literally) attached and inscribed onto their material culture. With each category that is created, a moral decision is made in that each one uplifts a certain perspective, and in doing so, often silences another (Bowker and Star 2000, 5-6). As Pels states: “time and position are inalienably concrete conditions of our knowledge practices, however god-like and transcendent we make our

methodological claims to be” (Pels 2021, 17). Our current classification practices are far from neutral, and are based on moral decisions that benefit a white, European society. As such, we need to “treat classifications as contingent, historical connections” that require critical analysis to more astutely understand their impacts and inferences (Pels 2021, 16).

Foucault states that “man is only a recent invention, a figure not two centuries old, a new wrinkle in our knowledge, and that he will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form” (Foucault 1971, xxv). The classification system that created the ‘primitive’, and that continues its perpetuation, is founded on this same notion of ‘man’ and what that ‘man’s’ civilisation resembles. As Foucault suggests, this classification can disappear- as it should- when new knowledge is held and acted upon. By critically examining classifications like the primitive trope, we are able to redefine “man” in such a way that broader definitions of what it means to be human become valid and respected. It allows the possibility for colonial legacies to be discontinued, which will work to undo the state racism that is present in settler-colonial contexts.

Foucault describes state racism as “a racism that society will direct against itself, against its own elements and its own products...the internal racism of permanent purification, and it will become one of the basic dimensions of social normalization” (Foucault 1976, 62). In the context of colonialism, the normalisation of European lifeways and the subjugation of indigenous ways of life reflect this internal racism, in that to maintain a functioning and productive society, indigenous populations either needed to conform, or be eliminated. To remove such populations from participation in ‘modernity’, it was inculcated in society that they were living in another era that was incommensurate with modern life. Pels comments on such temporal classifications that have historically sought to separate societies from a ‘new’ modernity:

Colonialism and the developmentalist nation-state spread such temporal classifications of modern thought globally (Pels, 2015: 780). We need to criticize them, but not to deny that historical breaks exist, nor that things change, nor even that ‘development’ may (sometimes) be necessary. Rather, they warn us that the kind of polythetic dichotomies that wreaked havoc on human interactions during colonial rule, such as ‘the native question’ or ‘black/white’, can be reproduced by conflation of

futurism that temporally oppose ‘moderns’, or ‘globals’ (or other people who know the future) to ‘tradition’ or ‘the locals’ (Tsing, 2000: 332–333) (Pels 2021, 15).

Pels therefore warns of the continuing impact of futurism and epochal classification, and the danger of separating ‘traditional’ life from the everyday. Classifications, particularly as they relate to Indigenous and First Nations groups are therefore steeped in unequal power relationships that are historically derived from colonial contexts. They are not neutral, and should no longer to be treated as such. A critical examination of the primitive trope reveals the lasting impact of such colonial classifications, and demonstrate the need for greater attention to be paid to language and its evolution in classificatory spaces.

The ‘Primitive’ Trope

The word “primitive” conjures many associations: ‘stone age man’ sitting on the edge of a rock-shelter or cave, a crackling fire or candlelight in place of an electric bulb, or, perhaps beyond the reach of those of us in the humanities, an indefinite integral or reverse of a derivative in mathematics. From the Latin *primitivus*, and then the Old French *primitive*, the word has its roots in ‘the first’ or ‘the original’. On the surface, it seems to be just a word. An arbitrary descriptor. But behind the lines of its letters lies a history steeped in colonisation, oppression, and deeply embedded racism. It has a shadow that has, at times, engulfed the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology, and which – though in a much-diminished state – continues to drape over scholarship and museum spaces today.

Tracing back to at least the fifth century BCE in Greece with the concept of the *barbaroi*, the trope has always possessed a moral and political character (Hall 1989, 2). Initially created to describe the Persians, the term came to encompass all that was not Greek; an embodiment of difference, and of inferiority. To be called *barbaroi* was to belong to a society perceived as tyrannical and non-democratic (Hall 1989, 2). The Athenian empire was largely built on slavery, where large numbers of slaves were not Greek. The polarity this fostered between ethnic lines contributed to the *barbaroi* distinction becoming synonymous with slavish characterisations (Hall 1989, 2, 17). Exemplified by Greek tragedy, the barbarian was “emotional, stupid, cruel, subservient or cowardly” or, those aspects which fell below the “standard of Hellenistic virtue” (Hall 1989, 17; Aristotle, *Politics*, II).

Depicted dressed in skins, eating raw meat, and in possession of bows rather than the spears of Greek close-quarter combat, the barbarian was the antithesis of the Greek (Hall 1989, 2). Notably, the Greek *barbaroi* came to harbour distinct political implications once it was applied to the Scythians and Egyptians alongside the Persians (Hartog 1988). Beyond the assumption that the Hellenistic way of life was the most 'virtuous', a superiority complex developed about the democratic system. The Scythians and Egyptians were criticised as nomads and anarchists, and as tyrants and royalists respectively (Hartog 1988). As such, all those groups not operating within the bounds of democracy were considered barbaric. This initial term, the primitive primitive if you will, thus embodies the two main continuations of the trope that this paper follows; as a political and a moral categorisation.

From the Greek, the term can be traced through its iteration as the French *sauvage* or English 'savage', exemplified by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Their 'savage' was built on the assumption that certain groups lived without law and without leisure. Hobbes argued that without a "common power", that is, a society with no sovereign, people live in a "condition which is called war" (Hobbes 1660 [1998], 84). Hobbes suggested that such people had "no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes 1660 [1998], 84). Indeed, Hobbes asserted that the 'savage' could not rise to the level of civilisation without 'government'. The "state of nature" in contrast to civilisation was thus the basis for Hobbes' conception of the savage. Hobbes also suggested that many people still resided in this state, pointing to "the savage people in many places of America" (Hobbes 1660 [1998], 83). This state was also conceptualised as the original state of being that 'civilised' society had already passed through. Locke concurred stating "thus in the beginning, all the world was America" (Locke 1690 [2016], 26).

Shakespeare's character Caliban from the 1611 play *The Tempest*, is a further example of the far-reaching notion of the 'savage' with its inclusion in the popular culture of the era. The figure of Caliban- whose very name is representative of 'cannibal', is a half-man, half-beast based on the tales of the late 15th century voyages around the world. He is described as "a devil, a born devil, on whose

nature/Nurture can never stick...” (ix.i.188-189). The island upon which Caliban resides is earlier described as having “no use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil/No occupation, all men idle, all/And women too, but innocent and pure” (ii.i.124-130).

From Hellenistic origins to Shakespeare and current Academia, the trope is continued as both a political category that acts in opposition to civilisation and therefore governance, and as a moral category that distinguishes between nature and civilisation. It is in these iterations that the foundational elements of the ‘primitive’ that concern a closeness to nature arise. Caliban’s description as a ‘half-beast’ refers to the separation of ‘man’ and nature that was the dominant zeitgeist of the seventeenth century, as influenced by both Christian and Renaissance philosophy. This stems from humanist principles that placed an emphasis on the imitation of Greek and Roman life that would foster a cultural rebirth after the ‘barbarous’ Middle Ages. It prompted new investigations of nature that were built on the ideal of the human species as occupying a position of control over nature. This placed humanity as above the rest of nature, and therefore as separate from it. This is crucial to the category of the ‘primitive’ as its iterations overtime have largely placed ‘primitive peoples’ as closer to nature than the ‘civilised’ social scientists and societies that describe them. This will be returned to later in the thesis where a discussion of the representations of First Nations’ knowledges on climate change will be explored.

It was Charles Darwin’s work, from the 1830s onwards, that initiated the shift of the primitive category into its most recognisable form. Writing to Charles Kingsley in 1862, Darwin remarks on the new discussions regarding the genealogy of man, suggesting it was “not so awful and difficult” to him as he had “seen a good many Barbarians”. He writes that “the thought, when [he] first saw in Terra. del Fuego a naked painted, shivering hideous savage, that [his] ancestors must have been somewhat similar beings, was at that time as revolting to [him], nay more revolting than [his] present belief that an incomparably more remote ancestor was a hairy beast” (Burkhardt et al. 1997, 71). In 1871, Darwin published *Descent of Man*, applying his new evolutionary framework to human development. In doing so, Darwin posits that given ‘savages’ lived in conditions the same as the animal world, they were kept from developing. He stated “savages are known to suffer severely from

recurrent famines, they do not increase their food by artificial means; they rarely refrain from marriage, and generally marry whilst young. Consequently, they must be subjected to occasionally hard struggles for existence, and the favoured individuals will alone survive” (Darwin 1871, 906). It was those that were the most accomplished hunters, the most avid tool users, and those that reared the most offspring that would survive, and supplant other tribes. Moral development, that aided the progress of civilisation, was an inherited trait that survived with the fittest (Darwin 1871). Social and moral qualities were then passed on through a society by its best; inculcated, and enforced by public opinion. Darwin concludes that as society became increasingly wealthy, the gains of natural selection dissipated. He suggests that as technology advanced, natural selection became less decisive. Darwin therefore moved the ‘savage’ from an othering mechanism into a scientific category. The savage came to represent the past of humanity, and therefore became something to study in order to understand human origins. Narratives of ‘Social Darwinism’ that stemmed from this work therefore create moral distinctions between a ‘civilised other’ and the ‘primitive’ whereby there is a moral development that comes from moving away from living in nature- alike Hobbes’ “state of nature”- where material developments become indicative of intellectual and moral superiority. These ideas became cemented in the next wave of anthropology.

In the 19th century, Darwin and Spencer’s biological evolution was translated into cultural evolution. In 1871, Edward Tylor published one of the most influential works in anthropology entitled *Primitive Culture*, which saw him become the father of the anthropology of evolutionism. This book aimed to establish anthropology as a science of culture, and used evolutionism to do so. Borrowing terminology from Montesquieu, Tylor developed a three-stage system of human progress that was separated into Savage, Barbarian and Civilised. In order to account for cultural variation that other contemporary anthropologists were attributing to cultural degradation, Tylor contends that societies across the globe were residing within different stages of evolution. In contrast to Darwin, Tylor was more concerned with the evolution of particular elements of society rather than its whole (Carneiro 2018, 6). Tylor identifies elements called ‘survivals’ as proof of cultural evolution; behaviours that are present within each stage of society in different forms. Pottery is presented as an example where

civilised society will use metal for pots and pans whereas in the past clay would have been used. Therefore, an increase in technology changes a material aspect of a continued behaviour. Tylor's evolutionism therefore was not restricted to the heterogeneity, definiteness and integration of earlier thinkers like Spencer and Darwin (Carneiro 2018, 6). Tylor assumed a level of universality to human consciousness that would prompt parallel journeys between societies in their development. He also promoted cultural diffusion through social interaction. Further, Tylor identified animism as a key component of 'savages' or 'lower races' therefore adding a religious element to the 'primitive' character (Tylor 1871, 93-94).

In 1877, Lewis Morgan published *Ancient Society*, which attempts to demonstrate that all human populations were the same, but varied in their stage of development. Evolutionism was thus still foregrounded in Morgan's anthropology, though he more often refers to "progress", "development", and "growth" (Carneiro 2018, 7). Building upon Tylor's three stage system, Morgan further separates these categories into upper, middle and lower segments (Morgan 1877). In doing so, Morgan attempts to describe the process through which societies "[win] their way to civilisation" (Morgan 1877, 3). He therefore disputes the theory of human degradation to "explain the existence of savages and of barbarians", and instead employs an evolutionary model. He contends that "in studying the condition of tribes and nations in these several ethnical periods we are dealing, substantially, with the ancient history and condition of our own remote ancestors" (Morgan 1877, 18). To Morgan therefore, social institutions were born from original ideas "implanted in the human mind from the beginning" (Carneiro 2018, 8). Morgan states:

The inferiority of savage man in the mental and moral scale, undeveloped, inexperienced, and held down by his low animal appetites and passions, though reluctantly recognized, is, nevertheless, substantially demonstrated by the remains of ancient art in flint stone and bone implements, by his cave life in certain areas, and by his osteological remains. It is still further illustrated by the present condition of tribes of savages in a low state of development, left in isolated sections of the earth as monuments of the past (Morgan 1877, p. 41).

Morgan utilises ethnographic examples from across the world to substantiate his framework. Studying subsistence, government, language, familial structure, religion, house life and architecture, and property, he developed a progressive hierarchy for societies (Morgan 1877, 4). Savagery, in Morgan's model, is categorised by subsistence lifestyles; Barbarism from domestication through to iron production; and then Civilisation by the phonetic alphabet and written language (Morgan 1877). These categories strongly resemble the 'savages' and 'barbarians' from the 5th century onwards. The lowest forms of subsistence were identified by the consumption of fruits and roots, followed by fish—as it had to be cooked to be consumed, before moving into farinaceous subsistence which implied a degree of horticulture, meat and milk subsistence, and then to unlimited subsistence or field agriculture which was an indicator of higher civilisation. The use of metals over wood and stone to fashion tools, and social organisation that moves beyond family structures, are also key indicators of social evolution.

Morgan's perspective outlined earlier, also shows he links inventions and discoveries in a way where each successive one is determined by its predecessor (Carneiro 2018, 7). The evolution of technology therefore stands in contrast to the evolution of social institutions, as technology is determined by a progression of events, whereas social institutions are developed through a universal shared consciousness (Carneiro 2018, 7). Morgan's model also assumes that brain size is implicative of intelligence (Morgan 1877, 35). Therefore, the lower the society presented in the progressive framework, and therefore the shorter their evolutionary process, the less intelligent they were considered to be. Ultimately, Morgan's *Ancient Society* is the beginning of the scientific 'primitive', and the basis for future categorisations of 'primitive' society. Drawing upon evolutionary theory and thinking, anthropology therefore established certain behaviours that became the 'primitive' trope. These include a lack of formal government or state, more animistic-leaning spiritual systems, no formal writing systems, and lesser degrees of agriculture. More controversially, the 'primitive' was not able to create art. Perhaps more generally, the 'primitive' was the 'other' of the European, Western anthropologist. Notably, material culture stands as evidence for the presence or absence of many of these traits. Tylor and Morgan based their categories on the presence and absence of

particular material culture; through the use of specific tools and weapons, and the presence of art objects. It was through these items of material culture that public discourse was built to vernacularise and represent the ‘primitive’.

As I have shown in the previous sections, the ‘primitive trope’ is a conglomeration of the most recurring traits as described by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Charles Darwin, Edward Tylor, and Lewis Henry Morgan. These works have been chosen due to their foundational place in the anthropology discipline, and their impact on the development of the ‘primitive’ narrative. These works label groups of people as “primitive” if: they take part in foraging, hunting and gathering; or adhere to a non-sedentary based lifestyle; if they do not possess a written language or communicate in a predominantly oral manner; if there is a lack of distinction between a formal governing body and social life; if there is a supposed lack of clothing; if material culture is considered ‘rudimentary’ in comparison to the ethnographer’s relative society; and if their ontologies involve animism, and spiritual explanations for the occurrences of everyday life.

The Primitive and West Papua

Morgan, in his aforementioned work, stated “Australia and Polynesia were “in savagery, pure and simple” (Morgan 1865, 16). From the first occurrence of European descriptions of New Guinea by Portuguese explorer Jorge de Meneses in 1526, the European gaze has primitivized and othered its people. Undertaken by missionaries, colonial officers, and later, the tourism industry and contemporary governments, the exoticising narrative of the ‘primitive tribe’ at once noble and savage, continues to shadow the people of the Indonesian provinces of West Papua and Papua.¹

West Papua has a complicated colonial history that is important to briefly mention to understand why the continuation of a ‘stone age’ image proved helpful for justifying governance. West Papua was part of the Dutch East Indies, and remained in the control of the Netherlands after Indonesian independence in 1949 (Webster 2013, 11). The Dutch claimed to retain their occupation in order to

¹ The term ‘Papuan’ is used to identify the indigenous inhabitants of the region formerly known as Irian Jaya, or Dutch New Guinea. This region is currently divided into two Indonesian provinces, namely West Papua and Papua. In this thesis, I use the term West Papua to denote the entire region west of Papua New Guinea, including the province of Papua.

prepare the country for self-independence though this was largely rhetoric (Webster 2013, 11). The Dutch-Indonesian New York Agreement in 1962 concluded Dutch rule of West Papua (Webster 2013, 10). In 1969, it was incorporated into Indonesia (Webster 2013, 10). From this point onwards, Indonesia continued in the vein of the Dutch in claiming to undertake a ‘civilising’ mission, however abandoned the guise of self-independence despite a large political movement of Papuans demanding just that.

It was the Dutch’s view that New Guinea’s “Stone Age inhabitants needed continued Dutch tutelage to enter the modern world” (Rutherford 2018, 85). That is, that a ‘civilised’ lifeway was the only way one could enter the contemporary era. Under Indonesian rule, however, the stone age image has remained and continues to prevent Papuans from entering into modernity. Hicks argues that racist designations alike the primitive trope are not grounded in arguments of biological difference, but in “cultural incommensurability” (Hicks 2020, 188). In this way, the Indonesian treatment of Papuans like the Korowai reflects the stone age narrative. It suggests the Korowai could not possibly possess or acquire imported goods, or education, or govern under democratic principles without first leaving their current lifeways behind. In short, the ‘ideal way of living’ is irreconcilable with their current state and practices. Rutherford suggests “‘the Papuans’” time becomes consequential by virtue of its coexistence with the time of modernity, a time for which their level of civilization and culture proves inadequate” (Rutherford 2018, 2). This aligns with colonial practice where the role of the coloniser is to civilise the local population. However, this is enacted with the underlying notion that this can never be achieved due to the ‘backwardness’ or ‘primitiveness’ that is the ‘natural condition’ of the original inhabitants. Rutherford marks the Papuan experience of a “haunted temporality”: they are, and have forever been, caught in a “deferred contemporaneity” (Rutherford 2018, 2; Bhabha 1994, 92). Papuans have been denied the right to exist in the same era as their European counterparts based on the creation of other people’s primitivism (Stasch 2015, 65). Primitive people don’t exist; primitive ideas do, and these ideas are always centred on claims about human ‘otherness’ and unequal human worth (Stasch 2015, 63). Stasch argues that the “globally dominant primitivist model has strong if submerged overlaps with histories of racism and racial theory, as well as connections

to the crypto-evolutionism of ‘development’ (Stasch 2015, 65). Stasch is correct in his assertions. The racist ideologies that underly development efforts, even in contemporary foreign policy today, are merely manifestations of the ‘civilising’ narratives that cast non-European lifeways as inferior to all others. In order to justify this hidden narrative, there are a series of metonymic parts that are demonstrated and represented as ‘primitive’ authenticity. This is the primitive trope, and it is clearly evident in narratives surrounding West Papua.

The writings of amateur anthropologist HJT Bijlmer and police commissioner Jan van Eechoud from the 1930s onwards, indicate the attitude towards the people of New Guinea by the colonial Dutch government. They also demonstrate the innate connection between material culture and perceptions of primitivity. Bijlmer explains that “weaving and pottery appeared unknown, and people felled the forest and cut planks with stone axes! Not a scrap of metal was to be seen; the Stone Age...was here in full bloom...The extant stone ax is the sign that this folk still pass their days untouched by civilisation” (Bijlmer n.d., 17). It is the presence and use of stone tools that sets apart the people of the Swart Valley as belonging to a past age. It is also the absence of certain material culture that contributes to this image; notably, woven cloth and metal tools. Anna-Karina Hermkens describes the preoccupation of the Dutch with *maro* bark-cloth as an indicator of a lack of social evolution (Hermkens 2007, 5). This consolidates the primitive trope as extrapolated from the works of Morgan and Tylor and others, where the lack of cloth- and therefore manufactured clothing-, as well as the absence of metal confers backwardness.

Van Eechoud describes the “iron hunger” of the “wild Papuans” that he encounters with his trekking party, suggesting that the machete, and the technology it represented, was recognised as superior and desirable by Papuans (van Eechoud 1953, 77-78). In his mind, using others’ feelings about tools was a means of restoring and maintain colonial order (Rutherford 2018, 88). He also described “contact articles” which were used to barter for peace and encourage hospitality when encountering new communities in his treks (Rutherford 2018, 90). These included axes, cloth, and beads, and indicates the way in which technology and material culture was used by the Dutch to colonise through implicit, or explicit, assertions of technological superiority. By demonstrating the desirability of the items

they possessed, they were able to control populations. Rutherford describes the performance acts of the Dutch that were held in order to maintain the illusion of this superiority, namely through the shooting of pigs with guns, and the playing of gramophones (Rutherford 2018, 110). By presenting Papuans with technology that they had not encountered before, and by presenting themselves as the controllers of this technology, the Dutch navigated the relationship between their need to control the land, but also their vulnerability to it.

The colonial anxiety towards its unknown territory is exemplified by how colonial agents described Papuans as the masters of their natural environment. As Van Eechoud commented, “wood, rattan, leaves: the Papuans do everything with these” (van Eechoud 1953, 30). This statement communicates the superiority of the Papuans in their own environment, in that they were able to live and sustain themselves in a place where van Eechoud and his peers could not. At the same time, this statement emphasises the ‘closeness’ of the Papuans to nature, and therefore their lack of civility. They relied on wood, rattan, and leaves because that was all they had. The absence of particular material culture, or technology, highlights their primitivity. To van Eechoud, technology was the sign of civilisation and superiority. His compass was what gave him control over the movements of his trekking expeditions, not the Dayak (Indonesian) guides the Dutch used to explore and charter Dutch New Guinea. In this environment, machines “became the measure of men” and it was through machinery that the colonising effort was able to proceed where modern machines could be commanded by officials (Rutherford 2018, 101). This brings to light the inextricable link between material culture and the colonising process in West Papua. It was the designation that lied between civilised and stone age, and was the currency through which hospitality was entered.

Importantly, the primitive stone age image was not laid to rest with the relinquishing of Dutch control of West Papua, but instead continues into the present, perpetuated by Indonesian governance. Stasch outlines that through interactions with tourism and the state, Papuans like the Korowai are still represented within the primitive trope. Within travel discourse, West Papua is portrayed as the “ultimate paragon of primitivity” (Stasch 2015, 67). Indeed, even a cursory search of travel programs to West Papua yields a company with the by-line “before they disappear”. This is indicative of the

definition of primitive that Stasch fosters, suggesting that the primitive is a “quality of authenticity and purity relative to something else” (Stasch 2015, 66). In this case, it involves the attribution of metonymic parts to Korowai and other Papuans whilst ignoring other elements of Papuan society that would remove this so-called authenticity due to their reflection of modernity. There is an array of attributes that are projected onto the Korowai, or selectively emphasised, that are all consistent with the primitive trope traced in this chapter. Emphasis is placed on their living arrangements and the structures of their homes, which are in the form of treehouses. This basic fact conjures for the Indonesian government and European tourist alike, images of animality, a closeness to nature, childhood innocence, and cultural primevalness (Stasch 2011). The Korowai’s alleged ‘closeness to nature’ is also linked with their isolation both geographically, and also from the global economy. Whilst the very presence of tourists or government officials that provide either aid or governance contradicts this claim, the image of the ‘nude’ hunter-gatherer without manufactured clothing or goods remains (Stasch 2014). Even though the Korowai do not conform to traditional classifications of ‘hunter-gatherers’, as they have domestic pigs and large banana gardens (Stasch 2015, 69). Nevertheless, the media clings to the practice of cannibalism as an identifying behaviour of the Korowai. To a lesser extent, government officials advocate for the same narrative, but modified to simply emphasise violence and danger (Stasch 2015, 69).

The Korowai, however, are not complicit in their representation as primitive. There exists a complex set of relations between governor and governed, particular in colonial contexts. Increasing local governance amongst Papuans has ensured greater levels of contact between the Korowai and officials of the Indonesian state. An increasingly globalised world has also resulted in greater numbers of tourists seeking the ‘lost tribes’ of West Papua. Consequently, adaptations have been made by the Korowai in order to benefit from these relationships. The Korowai have come to understand the Indonesian word *asli* as indicative of what tourist and officials alike seek. *Asli* refers to authentic, original, primitive, or indigenous, however the Korowai have come to understand it to mean ‘nude’ as in, not wearing imported clothing (Stasch 2015, 70). They recognise that visitors to their community wish to see “fibre skirts, rattan waistbands, and leaf penis wrappers” (Stasch 2015, 70).

As such, they hide away factory made clothing and imported goods prior to the arrival of tourists or officials (Stasch 2015, 70). To the Korowai, it would be immoral to not provide the experience that tourists and officials are expecting. In a way, this mimics the feast transactions that occur when feast owners manage the appearances and communications between attendees that ultimately leads to the exchange of food for dance performances, across the realms of geography and political independence (Stasch 2003; Stasch 2015, 71). In this scenario, the Korowai present themselves as ‘inferior’ to the tourists and officials in a way that emotionally moves them. As a result, performing primitivity leads wealthy foreigners or state officials to give objects the community lacks (Stasch 2015, 74). This can be interpreted as “recessive agency” or “negative agency” whereby a cultural concept exists that recognises the efficacy of expressions of deprivation in “eliciting relational engagement from the powerful” (Knauf 2002; Wardlow 2006; Stasch 2015, 76). Martial dancing in clothing constructed from non-imported materials for instance, is simultaneously an example of “primitive baseness” and of the power to compel the receipt of goods through the emotional manipulation of outsiders that the Korowai possess (Stasch 2015, 75). It therefore becomes evident that material culture provides the basis for not only representations of the Korowai, but also the interactions held with them (Stasch 2015, 70). The social relationships are defined by the question ‘what will we give?’ (Stasch 2015, 70). In this way, material objects become “the main question of social relations” (Stasch 2015, 70).

In the following chapter, I will delve deeper into the significance of material culture in creating ‘asymmetrical’ relations. This will be done by exploring how the discipline of ethnoarchaeology has used analogy and linear perceptions of development in relation to the material archaeological and ethnographic record to classify societies like West Papua as ‘primitive’.

CHAPTER TWO

ANALOGY, PREHISTORY, and the PRESENT

Introduction

Slama and Monro, in their work *From 'stone age' to 'real time'*, note that “there are probably no other people on earth to whom the image of the ‘stone age’ is so persistently attached than the inhabitants of the island of New Guinea” (Slama & Munro 2015, 1). This chapter focuses on how this stone-age image came to be applied to contemporary populations through the discipline of ethnoarchaeology, and ethnography more generally. To do so, I will first outline the history of linear thought in western thinking, followed by an overview of the ethnoarchaeology discipline and its preoccupation with linear development, and analogy. As I will show, methodological analogy fosters the formation of moral attachment to certain kinds of societies that are reflective of the historic ‘primitive’. This implies that the discipline of ethnoarchaeology and its methods are grounded in colonial and racist ideals. By looking back on a distinct and separate ‘past’ under notions of progression and evolution, our collective ancestors are disenfranchised of their humanness, while our contemporary neighbours are robbed of their modernity. After providing a case-study showing how linear thinking and analogy has been used to classify and oppress Papuans during colonial and more recent times, I will query the future of the ethnoarchaeology discipline, suggesting a path forward that sees analogy applied to *all* societies rather than a select, primitivised few. This alternative model is based in post-human critique and influenced by intersubjective, phenomenological, and entanglement thinking. It characterises humanity as in a constant state of creation, so as to include the past in modernity as much as modernity in the past. This is achieved through reference to the concepts of duration and da-sein. The result is that all people are represented as equally ‘human’, regardless of technological innovation, geographic location, or political situation.

Linear Thinking in Western Thought

Linear constructions of time are central to western thought. There is a large body of literature that describes how the temporal culture of the Western world came to exist and therefore how dominant models of history have arisen (Landes 2000; Adam 1995; Thrift 1983; Fabian 1983 etc.). According to Duhn and Farquhar, a neoliberal logic of time creates a linearity that moves from past to present and into the future in a manner that leads life to be directional, predictive and totalising (Duhn 2016; Farquhar 2016). Ermarth, though arguing against linearity as a focus in historical time, asserts that “linearity develops particular value in neutral time” where “the linear trajectory is identifiable and has interest because it is productive” (Ermarth 2010, 329). Development focused, linear time is also represented in Darwinist and Social Evolutionist roots. It is from these origins that theories of the rise of man from the ‘state of nature’ to ‘modern civilised society’ were developed (Lazarev 2018, 28). At the same time, romanticised portrayals of ‘primitive’ Indigenous peoples became popular, depicting “guileless noble savages, who led idyllic lives in harmony with nature, bereft of vices and strangers to social strife and inequality” (Samson 2005, 14). This underlying notion that modernity is corrupted by modernisation remains, particularly regarding climate change discourse. Ermarth contends that ‘the time of conventional history’ has been inherited from the Renaissance and is “an infinite, homogenous...and neutral medium for events” (Ermarth 2010, 232-233). Ermarth asserts “the time of conventional history is universally assumed in western societies” (Ermarth 2010, 232). She suggests time becomes a neutral medium that acts as an universal envelope to allow mutually informative measurements (Ermarth 2010, 325-328). Ermarth describes this as a ‘consensus apparatus’ which provides the common denominators to objectify and study the world (Ermarth 2010, 328). By constructing history as a linear progression, the nature of *being* is altered to only support one kind of *becoming*, and therefore fosters only the *becoming* of a certain kind of human: the way we construct our histories dictates the way we are allowed to exist. This has allowed for developmentalist histories to arise where certain ways of being are not considered commensurate with modernity. Ethnoarchaeology and its use of analogy has greatly impacted this model of history, and the kinds of *being* that are attributed to the past, and to modernity.

Linear Thinking and Analogy: The Comparative Method and Social Evolutionism in Ethnoarchaeology.

Linear thinking has prevailed in ethnoarchaeology, where the use of analogy has supported developmentalist ideas about the progression of society through stages of civilisation. Analogy has long been a part of science: whether as a memory device, explanatory tool, or prompter of discovery. Indeed, ‘the archaeological record’ and ‘material culture as text’ are two of the most common phrases in the archaeological discipline, and both are metaphors (Van Reybrouck 2012, 14). Whilst there is little debate about the role that analogy has played historically in the development of the archaeology discipline- particularly in relation to stone tool analysis -there are varying perspectives on the continued application of ethnographic analogies today (Van Reybrouck 2012, 15). Richard Gould stated in 1980 that it was “an idea whose time has gone”, whilst Ian Hodder claimed in 1982 that “all archaeology is based on analogy” (Gould 1980, x: original italics; Hodder 1982, 9; Van Reybrouck 2012, 15). Clearly, ethnographic analogy has a strong presence in archaeology, whether as a principle or a practice, as David Van Reybrouck’s work on ethnographic and primatological analogies in the study of prehistory (2012) so powerfully shows.

The comparative method is the most critiqued form of ethnoarchaeology. Originating from an Enlightenment legacy, it was built upon by the social evolutionism of the nineteenth century. The comparative method assumes that the behaviour of one population of people represents the collective past of one’s own. This practice has been occurring for centuries (Burrow 1966; Nisbet 1969; Hodder 1982; Piggot 1989). Aristotle and Thucydides looked to the ‘barbarians’ for the history of the Greeks, Tacitus saw the past of the Romans in contemporaneous Germans, and the New World offered Western Europe a supposed glimpse into human ancestry (Van Reybrouck 2012, 44-45).

It is fitting perhaps, given the role of present-day museums, that some of the first implications to be drawn with analogical comparisons between societies were iconographic, and occurred in art. Artists of the sixteenth century such as Lucas de Heere and John White took inspiration from the Ancient Britons and American ‘savages’ to depict the ancestors of Britain (Van Reybrouck 2012, 45). It was through the illustrations and engravings of this period, that intellectuals interacted with and presented

parallels between ‘primitive and primeval life’ (Van Reybrouck 2012, 45). Thomas Hobbes and John Locke were key proponents at this time, working from images of North American people in order to create their philosophical assertions. From the very beginning then, notions of hierarchy, paternalism, and superiority were grounded in analogical comparison. More than that, the influence of Christianity and Enlightenment philosophy is evident from the beginning whereby ‘civilisation’ was defined by progress and reason, and a detachment from a state of nature. Othering devices used to classify Ancient Britons and Americans as ‘savages’ were based on the notion that they lay closer to nature or ‘beasts’, and held less knowledge than their European counterparts. Indeed, Paul’s healing of Publius in Acts 28:1-10 is an example of ‘barbarous’ people lacking the knowledge to save their own in Christian conception. Romans 1:11 suggests that the ‘Barbarian’ is ‘unwise’, highlighting the mental inferiority that characterised non-European peoples. In addition to a lack of reason and knowledge, Hobbes argues that without government (in his narrow conception), there could be no civilisation. He continues to note however that government could not arise without leisure time to philosophise, which a ‘savage’ lifestyle did not allow for. Thus, from the beginning, analogy sought to locate indigenous people groups as ‘others’ in a way that placed them below the Europeans who were drawing these conclusions.

It was in the 1870s, as previously discussed in Chapter One, that notions of a global, unilinear process of social evolution became popular (McLennan 1869; Tylor 1871). There was suggested to be a single line of linear progress where Europe and America acted as a standard by “placing its own nations at one end of the social series and savage tribes at the other” with societies arranged between “as they correspond more closely to savage or to cultured life” (Tylor 1871, I, 26). This reflected a shift from the previous dominant paradigm of diffusionism, and placed emphasis on the independent innovation of a uniform human mind, rather than on historical connection or common origin (Van Reybrouck 2012, 77). In this context, perspectives of the ‘savage’ shifted from a general abhorrence regarding their lifestyle, to one that suggested that it instead reflected a stage in their development. This did not prevent active incursion or invasion into these societies, nor did it remedy the superiority complex upon which the hierarchy of development was based. Ethnoarchaeology was closely tied to

this social evolutionism, and formed a large part of its methodology. Ethnographic sampling became a common practice for establishing the “conjectural line” upon which humankind progressed (Van Reybrouck 2012, 77). Modern ‘survivals’ were compared with ethnographic examples as ‘proof’ of a slow evolution of ‘man’. For “if civilisation was the result of a slow, gradual progress from a state of savagery, ultimate proof of this lowly origin had to be sought in civilisation itself” (Van Reybrouck 2012, 77; Hodgen 1937). The use of piecemeal sections of material culture or behaviour to demonstrate survivals was later replaced by Morgan who began denoting entire groups of people with stages on a unilinear chain of progress (Van Reybrouck 2012, 80). In both cases, historical chronology was ignored in comparisons between past and present populations: “the *condition* of each is the material fact, the *time* being immaterial” (Van Reybrouck 2012, 80; Morgan 1877, 13). Tylor explicitly admits that through analogy:

...it seems possible to judge in a rough way of an early condition of man, which from our point of view is to be regarded as a primitive condition... This hypothetical primitive condition corresponds in a considerable degree to that of modern savage tribes (Tylor 1871, I, 21).

This represents, in no uncertain terms, the ‘understanding’ that contemporary hunter-gatherer, foraging, or non-European groups were regarded as ‘primitive’. This was dangerous in that the difference between anthropologists and other members of colonial expansion, like missionaries, was that the prior claimed to possess objective, scientific facts. Hence, it was evolutionism that primarily acted as “the ideological legitimization of the initial conquest of savage races” (Stocking Jr, 1995). Land, resources, and labour were seized by colonial governments in the name of civilising projects. By casting indigenous populations as lesser, both technologically and intellectually, justifications were made through civilising narratives on the basis of analogy.

Comparison of material culture acted as the basis for the justification of these analogies. John Lubbock remarked: “If we wish clearly to understand the antiquities of Europe, we must compare them with rude implements and weapons still, or until lately, used by savage races in other part of the world” (Lubbock 1865, 336). Certain items of technology, or material culture, became the ‘standard’ for measuring the hierarchy of ‘contemporary savagery’. Items such as bows and arrows,

slings, throwing sticks, boomerangs, bolas, pottery, canoes, fortifications, fish-hooks, and nets were all indicators of savagery or primitivism (Lubbock 1865, 447). Behaviours of domestication such as agriculture, and the keeping of dogs and hogs were also mentioned in Lubbock's compilation (Lubbock 1865, 447). Separated into stages of least advanced, over tolerably advanced, and well advanced, Lubbock clearly ascribed moral judgement to variations in 'savage' life (Lubbock 1865; Van Reybrouck 2012, 64). Tylor followed a similar trend, attempting to trace the progression of fire-making (Tylor 1865, 20-29). According to Tylor, ancient Mexicans and the modern Gauchos of the Pampas were classified at the same level of development due to their use of the fire-drill, which was considered less advanced than the cord-drill, the bow-drill, and the pump-drill. Parallels in material culture were therefore used not only to interpret the function of items in the archaeological record, but to denigrate societies on a scale of social hierarchy that saw both contemporary societies and the prehistoric past as inferior to that of the European world based on a relative comparison of technology or material culture.

It was during the late nineteenth century that ethnoarchaeology moved from a comparison of material culture to a method for prescribing identity and identifying civilisation. Anthropologists and archaeologists like McLennan began identifying social behaviours such as bride-kidnapping and marriage as 'ritual behaviours' with implications for hierarchies of civilisation (Van Reybrouck 2012, 68). Ethnoarchaeology in social evolutionism therefore shifted from a focus in tools and technology to comment on laws, customs, morals, language, and religions (Van Reybrouck 2012, 78). Analogies therefore became strictly based on similarity, and dealt with broader themes and projections (Van Reybrouck 2012, 78).

Franz Boas reintroduced historical modes of inquiry to the ethnoarchaeological method, suggesting "the life of a people in all its aspects is a result of its history" (Boas 1888, 637; Van Reybrouck 2012, 87). The study of the evolution of culture was then replaced with the study of causality; or functionalism. Following the first half of the 20th century, during which anthropology was implicated in the oppression of indigenous people's through colonial rule (Stocking Jr 1995) and defined itself as the "study of primitive societies" (Asad 1973, 11), there have been three camps of opinion on

ethnoarchaeology. There are those who have lost interest in the comparative method, those who use the method and benefit from its application and interpretations, and those who actively critique the discipline (Van Reybrouck 2012, 91).

Ethnoarchaeology: New Archaeology and Post-Processual Archaeology

Following the turn of the twentieth century, ethnoarchaeology fell out of popularity. Sporadic publications still applied its methodology; however, it was not until the 1960s that New Archaeology or Processual Archaeology revitalised ethnoarchaeology with its positivist search for variability (Gosden 1999, 57; Trigger 2006, 399). Analogy became central to the processual archaeological methodology (Van Reybrouck 2012, 15-16). Binford argued that it was essential for archaeologists to be trained in ethnography, for without it, they would not be able to fully grasp the correlation between social behaviour or beliefs and material culture. As such, archaeologists would be ill-trained to infer ‘sociotechnic’ or ‘ideotechnic’ information from archaeological finds (Trigger 2006, 399). New Archaeology’s ethnoarchaeology was built on the premise that the regularities in human behaviour were consistent enough to provide comparative studies, informing archaeological records from prehistoric sites (Trigger 2006, 399). This neo-evolutionist perspective mimics Tylor’s earlier sentiments about ‘survivals’. Binford did stipulate however, that all analogies were inconclusive, and that for a comparison to be used, there must be a contemporary example of the specific use of material culture with a specific human behaviour (Trigger 2006, 399). This perspective has arguably created many of the equivalencies between more contemporary groups and a prehistoric European past given the direct application of specific material culture to that of the past. New Archaeology saw material culture as directly indicative of social organisation- therefore passive in its use by society. Trigger suggests that for ethnoarchaeology to be effective in its description of the correlation between material culture and human behaviour, there must be systematic cross-cultural studies (Trigger 2006, 406). The unwritten stipulation of this suggestion however, is that such cross-cultural studies must take place in foraging, hunter-gather, or ‘traditional’ societies.

Following the realisation that New Archaeology’s ethnoarchaeology was less productive than initially conceptualised, Binford developed middle-range theory which sought to establish “the

spatial, temporal, and formal correlates of specific forms of human behaviour and their material expressions in the ethnographic record and to identify similar residues in archaeological contexts” (Binford & Sabloff 1982; Trigger 2006, 414). Ethnoarchaeology then became more generalised in its predictions rather than searching for universal specificities. Middle-range theory also embraced other methodologies such as use-wear analysis and experimental archaeology (Trigger 2006, 414). Post-processual archaeology then adapted ethnoarchaeology to refute processual claims that material culture must reflect social organisation (Trigger 2006, 452). Hodder provided new studies where material culture was shown to be an active element in society that held the agency to alter social relations (Trigger 2006, 452-453). Hodder therefore used an adapted ethnoarchaeology to actively refute Binford’s processual ideas about the passivity of material culture, which were created by the same methodology. The agency of material culture is an important concept for undoing the damage of the ethnoarchaeological discipline. This will be explored in more depth in the following chapter which highlights the way objects can reclaim their history from colonial narratives within museum spaces.

Kleindienst and Watson’s 1956 study of, in their terms, an “archaeological inventory of a living community” is most often attributed as the turning point in ethnoarchaeology, and the beginning of the discipline as it stands today (Kleindienst and Watson 1956; Lane 2006, 403). Kleindienst and Watson explored the extent to which immaterial aspects of a society could be studied through the material remains of its culture in conjunction with ethnographic fieldwork (Kleindienst and Watson 1956; Lane 2006, 403). This work stipulated that the function of an object, as exemplified by its analogue in the ethnographic present, was necessary for any higher-order interpretation to be made (Kleindienst and Watson 1956, 76). Without any evident function, material culture could not provide any insight into the life of the past, and would fall into the categories of “problematical objects” or “the ubiquitous “sacred paraphernalia”” (Kleindienst and Watson 1956, 75). In this work, Kleindienst and Watson outline a proposed methodology for an “archaeological inventory of a living community” (Kleindienst and Watson 1956, 77). To this day, ethnoarchaeology remains an ongoing discipline of archaeology. It remains heavily critiqued, as will be explored later in this chapter. Other

attempts have been made to reframe ethnoarchaeology as archaeological ethnography where the discipline denotes “both a reflexive and a detailed exploration of social practices involving the materiality of the past” (Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulos 2009, 70). This may be effective in allowing analogy to act as a bridge between past and present, but in a way that doesn’t seek to separate indigenous populations from modernity or civilisation.

Ethnoarchaeology: The Three Age System

Perhaps the largest influence on ethnoarchaeology and logics of analogy was the development of the Danish three-age system which came to dominate scientific archaeology. This classification system created a dualistic version of prehistory where “a natural, universal, global Stone Age” developed into the ‘metal ages’ (Van Reybrouck 2012, 48). Whilst this model was created as a nationalistic act that sought to provide a past for the Danish nation-state, and more broadly, describe a Scandinavian prehistory, it became recognised as a global sequence (Van Reybrouck 2012, 50). It should also be noted that the initial explanation for the progression of societies through these stages was through migration, rather than evolution. It was postulated that a new race, with higher technological standards invaded to moved societies from the use of stone to the metal of bronze, and then again, societies were replaced with those who understood iron metallurgy (Van Reybrouck 2012, 50). As such, Thomsen did not see the three ages as representing stages of succession (Van Reybrouck 2012, 50). Regardless however, the dualistic distinction was drawn between stone and metal. Given the populous nature of stone tools across Europe, the Stone Age became representative of a universal primeval stage of humanity (Van Reybrouck 2012, 50). This dualism is important for the history of ethnoarchaeology and broader models of history. It created a separate space, both chronologically and thematically, between prehistory and history; a distinction which remains to this day.

Given the ubiquitousness of stone tools across the globe, ethnography was seen as a viable methodology to explain the archaeological record, and, as such, understand the human past. However in areas of the world where metal material culture was populous in addition to stone tools, such as Denmark, ethnography was not seen to hold the same level of relevance to the local context. As such, the dualism developed that saw the Stone Age as universal in nature and the result of a slow

evolution, whereas the metal ages were the result of local culture and rapid change; a distinction was drawn between evolution, and migration and diffusion. As a result, ethnography, from this early use in the archaeological discipline, was not seen as useful beyond Stone Age society. This holds great importance as it has set the trend of the only ethnoarchaeological studies being undertaken as occurring in so-called 'Stone Age societies'.

By its next iteration, the Three Age System represented progressive steps of civilisation that represented an advancing human race (Nilsson 1868; Van Reybrouck 2012, 52). Nilsson stemming from gradualist theory, described civilisation as passing through four stages: hunting and fishing, then pastoralism, then agriculture, before commercial civilisation (Kuper 1988, 64; Van Reybrouck 2012, 52). Wilson, influenced by Thomsen and Worsaae, viewed this classification as the basis for a scientific archaeology (Van Reybrouck 2012, 53). In this new generation however, the dualism between the Stone Age, and the metal ages was still maintained. Wilson argued the Stone Age was "the history, not of men, but of man; not of nations but of the race" (Wilson 1851, 1; Van Reybrouck 2012, 53). The latter ages however, represented the hard work of local groups, influenced by migrations (Wilson 1851, I, 11-13).

This dualism is perhaps best exemplified by Sven Nilsson's work, which is based on the methodology of palaeontologist Georges Cuvier. Cuvier developed a method of comparative anatomy where comparison was made between the skeletal morphology of extinct species with living animals. Nilsson expanded this methodology to create 'comparative ethnography', which sought to make sense of the archaeological record (Van Reybrouck 2012, 54). Nilsson's essay on the Nordic Bronze Age and its origins is comprised of a case study on Kivik in southern Sweden, exploring petroglyphs. Nilsson attributed the petroglyphs' presence to the importation of a sun cult by Phoenician merchants who were involved in trading bronze for Baltic amber (Van Reybrouck 2012, 53; Nilsson 1863). Explanations for new cultural phenomena were therefore attributed to cultural diffusion in the metal ages, rather than a gradual progress as it would be had it occurred in the Stone Age. Universal growth had therefore been substituted for historical connection (Van Reybrouck 2012, 53). Nilsson's earlier work on hunters and fishers compared this early material culture with

ethnographic examples. Therefore, there was an intentional shift in methodology that moved from comparative ethnography into a study of Folklore when Nilsson moved between historical periods (Van Reybrouck 2012, 55). Remnants of behaviour present in contemporary Ireland were the basis for Nilsson's assertions about the Bronze Age. Whilst this is arguably still comparative ethnography, it is only European contemporary culture that is applied to the metal ages; this comparison never extends into the Stone Age.

The greatest impact on the discipline of ethnoarchaeology, was the creation and adoption of the Three Age System. It allowed a separation to occur between the stone and metal ages; a separation that continues to this day that disconnects the shared humanity of the people allocated to each period. This separation has allowed the Stone Age or prehistory to be viewed as an infancy of humankind, rather than as a fully-developed humanity in its own right. In fact, "moral and mental inferiority was projected into the past" (Van Reybrouck 2012, 65). Importantly, ethnographic analogy not only serves to disenfranchise past populations, but also causes biased judgements about the present. It contributed to the narrative of 'backwardness' and lack of 'development' that was, and has been applied to justify the colonisation of indigenous groups across the globe.

Critiques of Ethnoarchaeology

Westermarck represents the first critique of ethnoarchaeology, drawing attention to the circular reasoning which ethnoarchaeology can fall into: one had to "avoid assuming a custom to be primitive, only because, at the first glance, it appears to be so" (Westermarck 1891, 6). Westermarck amended the traditional evolutionist methodology to suggest that similarity was not enough for analogy, and that the causes of social phenomena needed to be understood before comparison could be made (Westermarck 1891, 5). In 1896, Boas published a critique of the comparative method suggesting the system of evolutionism was of doubtful value (Boas 1896, 276). He suggested that before comparisons could be made, the compatibility of the material had to be proved (Boas 1896, 275). He also criticised the selective sampling of evolutionary ethnography (Boas 1896, 277). Lastly, he denounced the uniformity principle, suggesting there was no evidence to attest to a uniform development across the globe (Boas 1896, 273).

Most archaeologists recognise that the cultural frameworks in which we act are historically derived, and therefore that “each culture is a particular historical product” (Hodder 1995, 86). Following this logic, each culture must therefore be acknowledged as unique (Hodder 1995, 86). This is an important critique to bring to the fore as “primitive savages did not only resemble prehistoric ones, they also resembled each other, regardless of their individual histories” (Van Reybrouck 2012, 71). Gosden states that: “I feel that ethnoarchaeology is immoral, in that we have no justification for using the present of one society simply to interpret the past on another, especially as the present is often seen as a latter-day survival of stage passed elsewhere in the world...Societies ought to be studied as interesting in their own right or not at all” (Gosden 1999, 9). Gosden recognises here, alike Van Reybrouck, the historical baggage of the discipline as explored through this chapter, of specific present societies being interpreted as the past of another. Such a critique is important to make very clear. If archaeology is to be decolonised, then methodologies grounded in such perspectives need to be done away with. By only drawing analogies between ‘traditional’ or hunter-gatherer, or ‘tribal’ societies and the prehistoric past, all of these societies are said to be the same. Often, societies with very little in common are lumped into singular categories that allow for their use in analogical comparison. With this being the case, it would not be difficult to extend the parameters of the analogy to include Western, European, ‘modern’, ‘industrialised’, or any other kind of society. In this way, each singular society could be viewed in their own right, while at the same time, each is recognised as having something to offer to the narrative of history.

Current ethnoarchaeology is criticised as ‘allochronous’ in insisting on an ‘ethnographic present’ that resides outside of historical processes (Fabian 1983). This leads to the categorisation of societies as pre-modern, and therefore as being located outside of modernity; outside of time. Kevin Birth however, also warns of the dangers of homochronism where time is not accepted as variable and subjective, and “diverse, multiple, and socially and materially produced” (Birth 2008). The impacts of this will be explored later in this chapter. McEachern, while focusing particularly on African ethnoarchaeology, highlights the historical objectification that results from allochronous representations of ethnoarchaeology that is applicable more broadly (McEachern 1996, 244). Views of “ahistorical

humanity” eliminate “the possibility for cultural change” from the area (MacEachern 1996, 246). This locks the communities in question into the role of relics, to be denigrated or idealised depending on the situation (MacEachern 1996, 246). The assumption of continuity in analysing ‘traditional’ elements of society is dangerous and removes the agency of people to accommodate social change (Stahl 1993, 245-253).

Even after decolonising attempts largely removed evolutionism from anthropological disciplines, the underlying ideology continued to “haunt Western thought” (Gosselain 2016, 219). Gosselain terms an “ongoing ideological opposition between Western and non-Western societies” as the reason for the focal points of ethnoarchaeology. Whilst Gosselain ultimately argues that the discipline is in need of destruction, he does concede that ‘direct historical approaches’ can be useful for historical interpretation (Gosselain 2016, 224). His caveat however, is that direct historical approaches move beyond just ethnoarchaeology to include history, anthropology, art history, and historical linguistics (Gosselain 2016, 224). Gosselain’s ideal ethnoarchaeology therefore resembles the one proposed by Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos.

Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos conceptualise archaeological ethnography not as a practice, but as a space; a space for multiple coexistences of scholars and artists, participants and publics, material artefacts and political climates (Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulos 2009, 83). This new conceptualisation of ethnoarchaeology allows for different ontologies and epistemologies, and of multiple temporalities and materialities to be included in a space that is ultimately collaborative (Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulos 2009, 83). The authors seek this to be a trans- or post-disciplinary space that is ultimately a starting point for the decolonisation of scholarship, archaeology, and anthropology (Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulos 2009, 83). I have hope in this new iteration of ethnoarchaeology, but only if analogy is drawn between more than the ‘traditional’ societies that have been historically the focus of ethnoarchaeology. A feedback loop occurs when only certain types of societies are compared to others; one with a moral dimension that relegates the present society to dimensions of the past.

Additionally, by viewing ethnography as collective practice, the representation of present societies can be monitored by the societies themselves. It creates an accountability that has been lacking in the ethnoarchaeological discipline thus far, and ensures a more reciprocal research. Politicised archaeological ethnography will additionally seek to actively undue the harm of past research in aiding present communities to reach out from their historic definitions as ‘stone age’ beings or ‘living relics’ and demonstrate their active and rightful place in modernity (Hamilakis & Agnostonopoulos 2009, 81).

It is important to note the multiple power dynamics and imbalances that have occurred and continue to occur within the ethnoarchaeological discipline (Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulos 2009, 80). There are surface level power dynamics; such as between manual and intellectual labour on a dig-site, but there are also more elusive and hidden dynamics at play (Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulos 2009, 80). There are those between local political officials and the general public where excavations occur, with often clear divides in financial standing (Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulos 2009, 80). There are dynamics between the archaeological teams and the local communities, and between heritage bodies and government developments. For ethnoarchaeology, however, I suggest that the most important power dynamics lie between the living community being studied, and the impact of the conclusions drawn from their lives.

It is crucial to understand the logic of ethnoarchaeology in order to then question the norms of the discipline. Given that analogies are arguments, they can never be true or false (Van Reybrouck 2012, 21). Rather, arguments are judged in terms of validity (Hodges 1977, 53-60). This relationship is complex, in that a valid argument does not always lead to a true conclusion, just as an invalid argument can provide a true conclusion (Van De Putte 1982, 6-8). An argument becomes valid however, when both the premises and conclusions are true (Van De Putte 1982, 8). Most analogies are in the form of inductive reasoning and are therefore considered less strong than the perfect syllogism that is offered by deductive reasoning (Dorolle 1949, 170-172; Salmon 1963, 70-73; Copi 1972, 351-68; Van Reybrouck 2012, 22). It should also be noted, that an “argument can be good without being valid” (Hodges 1977, 59; Van Reybrouck 2012, 22). In this case, arguments can be

considered rational if their conclusions seem sound, even if they are not decisive (Hodges 1977, 59; Van Reybrouck 2012, 22). When seeking truth, most scholars speak in terms of probability, where analogy is a “source of plausible conjectures, not guaranteed conclusions” (Holyoak & Thagard 1995, 30).

Van Reyrouck (2012, 24) distinguishes six aspects to archaeological analogy, namely: source and target; materials and non-materials; and observables and non-observables. Source and target refer to the contemporary example and archaeological study respectively. The material is the physical characteristic of the object of study, while the non-material is that which is inferred from the object. The observable in an analogy is the phenomena noted from the contemporary example that is used to make inferences about the non-observable aspect of the past in question (Van Reybrouck 2012, 24). Van Reybrouck (2012, 240) argues that archaeologists will generally emphasise the observables of the target, whereas ethnoarchaeologists will focus on the observable of the source. It is the relationship between these entities that form analogy. There is a directionality to the practice also, where the ethnoarchaeologist moves from observed similarities towards predicted similarities in response to difference (Van Reybrouck 2012, 25). Moving towards a differentiation of similarity, Van Reybrouck (2012, 25) identifies different levels of similarity, namely: “between attributes; between propositions; and between systems” (see also Holyoak & Thagard 1995, 101-137). The similarity between attributes is a one-to-one equation (a::b); relationships between attributes are summarised by similarity between propositions (a:b::c:d); and similarities between systems detail relationships between propositions (A:B::C:D) (Van Reybrouck 2012, 25). Further, the observed and predicted similarities need to be causally related (Hesse 1966; Van Reybrouck 2012, 26). As such, there is a logic to ethnoarchaeology that governs its analogy. It is not this logic that is problematic, but rather, its application.

It should be clear that I do not necessarily take issue with ethnoarchaeology as a methodology specifically. It is rather the moral undertones that have been conferred from its analogies that are problematic. For example, Tylor would suggest a comparison be made between the earrings of European individuals with the adornments of Papuan New Guinean noses, the earlobes of East-

Africans and the lips of Amazonians (Van Reybrouck 2012, 69). In applying Jackson's Blind Impress, or notions of a durating history across geographic space, it is possible that there is a human condition that predisposes individuals to seek adornment, as a large body of anthropological literature will attest. It is only that Tylor would assert that the European earrings are "a relic of a ruder mental condition" that is problematic (Van Reybrouck 2012, 69).

A logical, valid argument could be made in ethnoarchaeological terms that compares prehistoric material with a contemporary Western society. This would subvert disciplinary practice, which historically (and contemporaneously) only takes 'hunter-gatherer' or 'foraging' communities as its subject. Hypothetically, a campsite in the Blue Mountains National Park in Sydney, with evident firepits could be taken as the source, with the target of a Palaeolithic site in the Vezere Valley in France. The ring of rocks around the outside of the carbonated material are observed to act as a fire break that prevents the fire from spreading. Given the same ring of rocks appearing around the Vezere Vallery example, a similarity between attributes can be made which suggests that a, it is a firepit, and b, the function of the rocks remains the same. Just as the egg-shell and apple cores scattered both within and around the firepit in the Blue Mountains indicates cooking and gathering, so too do the scattered bones around the Vezere Valley pit. This represents a similarity of propositions.

There has, and most likely will, always exist a dichotomy between a search for difference and sameness in the archaeological discipline. Cultural variability is examined through ethnoarchaeology, which, as demonstrated, utilises hypothetico-deductive methodology to identify cross-cultural 'rules' of behaviour (Hodder 1995, 87). There will always exist critiques of the ethnoarchaeological discipline that argue against its use of analogy, claiming that no society can act as a source of information for another. And this is valid. But I suggest that even imperfect understandings of the past based in hypothetico-deductive methodologies that embrace comparisons of ALL societies with the past are preferable over ones resulting from a method that harms the communities they work with. A more moral and ethical archaeology is possible which can aid in undoing the harm of past representations. Disciplines have a duty of reflexivity to look back on their

legacies and be able to change accordingly. It would be unrealistic to assume that ethnoarchaeology can be decolonised without changing some of its core methodologies.

Case Study: Stone Age Temporalities

Van Reybrouck identifies how “ethnography could be invoked as long as the Stone Age was considered a period ‘out of time’ where historical phenomena had no hold” (Van Reybrouck 2012, 55). As such, the Stone Age represented “humanity in its most natural condition” where latter prehistoric ages represented “different cultural traditions” (Van Reybrouck 2012, 55). In this same way, contemporary groups are located ‘outside of time’ by the analogies drawn between their lifeways and the image of the Stone Age. There remains a persistent association of Papuans with the ‘primitive’, perhaps most evidently with the stone-age image that represents “the ultimate realm of the primitive other” (Slama & Munro 2015, 3). Said identified the practice of locating non-Western people with “cultural, temporal, and geographical distance” as a mean of creating temporal remoteness (Said 1978, 222). Slama and Munro explore this representation in ‘real-time’, a new expression replacing ‘modernity’ in some spaces that refers to this new era of immediate digital communication, and denotes participation in today’s globalised modernity (Slama & Munro 2015, 3). The ‘real-time’ effectively places all online, global citizens on the same spatio-temporal realm that is both connected and distinct from offline life (Slama & Munro 2015, 3).

Slama and Munro state: “...in the age of the real-time, considerably more effort has to be invested in denying Papuans a role in the present, and in relegating them to a past time by identifying them with stone-age images” (Slama & Munro 2015, 4). Slama & Munro provide a pertinent example: a Javanese businessman receives a picture on his smartphone of a Papuan man, sitting in an air-conditioned bank, wearing his penis sheath (*koteka*) whilst he is served by a female bank employee dressed in business attire (Slama & Munro 2015, 3). The friend of the Javanese businessman, we are told, could easily have taken a photo of many other Papuans who were dressed in pants rather than *koteka-koteka* (Slama & Munro 2015, 4). Instead, the friend has made the Papuan into a curiosity; representing the Papuans in pants grants them contemporaneity, rather than the ‘primitiveness’ that Indonesian modernity frames them in (Slama & Munro 2015, 3-4). This photo then made its way

onto an online portal with 1.6 million users. Comments on the photo were made that ultimately denied the “contemporary contemporaneity” of the life of this Papuan man, suggesting the ‘naked’ Papuan did not belong in the bank in the same way that his ‘cool watch’ did not belong on this wrist (Slama & Munro 2015, 5). Other comments forced the man into a personification of tradition, where he is framed in contrast to the modern Indonesians in both the bank and the online forum (Slama & Munro 2015, 5). This reflects the ‘denial of coevalness’ that Johannes Fabian outlined in relation to Western scholarship, but outside of this sphere in the public realm (Fabian 1983).

The most long-lasting legacy of the stone-age image of Papuans stems from the Dutch colonial era. In this context, Papuan ways of life were compared with the so-called ‘real world’ of the Dutch. Now in a colonised environment, the Papuan world more closely resembles both the ‘real’ realm of the Dutch, and of the ‘real-time’ that the Dutch could not begin to imagine in the 1850s (Slama & Munro 2015, 4). Rutherford explores how Dutch technological demonstrations were key element of Dutch control, and makes clear the underlying premises that “machines were the measure of men” (Rutherford 2015, 43). She identified how for the Dutch, “stone tools and Stone-Age selves went together in a way that made New Guinea’s present a mirror onto the Netherlands’ past” (Rutherford 2015, 46). Rutherford also highlights how Papuans were located not only outside of time, but also as geographically isolated; as a “land forgotten by time” (Rutherford 2015, 46). Rutherford explains that a “temporal wall divided the Dutch from the Papuans” (Rutherford 2015, 48). In addition to the comparison made between the material culture of the Papuans and the Dutch, a continuation is evident in the colonial reaction to Papuan garments. Rutherford recounts a narrative from a Dutch official, Boelen, who commented on the Kapauku agents wearing their penis gourds in combination with American helmets as a comical sight (Rutherford 2015, 51). He suggests that the clothing never quite fit the men, even when they wore the uniforms. Boelen’s reaction is similar to the Javanese businessman’s. Ultimately, both cases reveal a negative response to individuals bridging the temporal wall between the ideal ‘stone age’ image and the real-world; individuals whose experiences transcend these colonial categories. The uniform, watch, and smartphone represent modernity, and as such, their possession rivals the Papuans’ traditional image. At the same time however, Papuans

have been ridiculed for their appropriation of ‘modern’ western regalia in colonial contexts. Rutherford identifies that “natives had to have the capacity to become like their colonisers for the civilising mission to have meaning” (Rutherford 2015, 51). They could never achieve this, however, for then the civilising mission would be over, and the colonial power would have to concede their territory (Rutherford 2015, 51). This demonstrates the crucial part material culture plays in representations and characterisations of communities located outside of time, whilst also making clear the impossible situation they are placed in. Colonial constructions will always disenfranchise the communities they apply to, and as such, any continuation of them must be eradicated.

It must also be acknowledged that history is deeply political, and in many circumstances, a dangerous act. In many situations where communities have been located outside of time, their people remain as minorities, campaigning for sovereignty. In the case of West Papua, establishing alternative histories to the official narratives provided by Jakarta is seen as “controversial and subversive”; as a “dangerous act” (Timmer 2015, 97). Budi Hernawan’s work with West Papuan victims of Indonesian military torture provides another example of what happens when Papuans are unintentionally moved into real-time narratives (Hernawan 2015). When videos were uploaded to YouTube of the instances of torture, the intended audience for the practice was surpassed. Beyond the village, these individuals became victims of contemporary state practices, and therefore could not be relegated to the stone-age, but rather had to be received in real-time (Slama & Munro 2015, 6). Through mediatisation however, the torture acts were met with dehumanising narratives that resorted to evolutionist and racist ideology (Slama & Munro 2015, 6). The appearance of ‘monkey’ as a racist moniker demonstrates that even when brought into real-time, Papuans are not represented as equals, but rather under derogatory classifications that position them on a lower evolutionary stage than contemporary Indonesians (Slama & Munro 2015, 6). The ongoing impacts of evolutionist thinking are therefore still evident, even when West Papuans are brought into real time, through a reinforcement of stone-age discourses (Slama and Munro 2015, 6). In these instances, temporal inequality is therefore established as an active means of oppression that locks Papuans out of normalised narratives in the real-time.

Deconstructing Linear Thinking and Analogy

There are many alternate perspectives on temporality that present new opportunities for historical modelling. These ideals reject linearity and progressivist thinking in a way that will ensure that all humans are considered equally ‘human’ regardless of their temporal location in history. As such, regardless of a continuing ethnographic comparison in ethnoarchaeology of primarily ‘hunter-gatherer’, ‘tribal’, or ‘traditional’ societies, the resultant perspectives will contain no moral inferences of superiority or development. Henri Bergson’s concept of duration offers one such opportunity.

Duration is a concept regarding the nature of temporality. Bergson describes duration as a succession, rather than a sum or addition of fragments of time (Bergson 1908, 78-79). In this way, events are tied together and related by what has come before them. By no longer conceptualising units of time as “sums”, time can be constructed as an “indefinitely continued process of accumulation” (Bergson 1908, 80). This accumulation can be conceived in Mark Rifkin’s analogy of times’ movement as an “immanent flow” rather than the breaking of distinct parts into “a series of disconnected simultaneities” (Rifkin 2017, 97). Similarly, Ingold’s metaphor of time as a plaited braid that is infinite in length but comprised of individual finite strands provides further example of a kind of duration that would see historic events, material culture, or societies as intimately entangled rather than sequentially segregated (Ingold 2021, 91). A conception of accumulation and time as a flowing and variable entity, begins to encompass notions of precedence; time becomes an embodiment of what has come before. It is past experience then, that gives “coherence and meaning to what we sense while being guided by encounters and possibilities in the present” (Rifkin 2017, 97). The past experience however, is not experienced as distant but innately tied to the present. Life carries on indefinitely and as such, there is a continual friction, tension, and contact between the strands of the young and the old; “every particular life contributes, in its singular way, to the record that is life itself” (Ingold 2018, 159). Michael Jackson echoes this sentiment, where he conceives time as folding into and upon itself, where in the present lies the “enigma of the always-already-there” (Jackson 2018, 256). Jackson’s ‘Blind Impress’ is this conceptual underpinning of human existence

that sees time and experience as preceding and determining individual phenomenology, dictating the way we each exist and ‘be’ in time (Jackson 2018, 257). Aboriginal Australian temporality is also underpinned by this accumulated and precedented perspective of time. Indigenous Australian author Alexis Wright, in her work *Carpentaria*, references this conception describing the framework of Aboriginal Australian time as “all times”, meaning “a way of showing that pasts, futures and present times exist holistically and simultaneously” (Wright 2006, Rowland 2019, 543). The past is therefore not relegated to a distant time that can be accessed only through memory. This serves to decentralise time from human experience, and prevents the relegation of traditional knowledge from belonging only to a distant past (Wright 2006; Rowland 2019, 543). Moreover, it creates a past in the present that prevents tradition from being cast in opposition to modernity in that both have already been and are concurrently occurring. It is through this understanding of time that ‘collapsed history’ is able to be told. ‘Collapsed history’ is a form of storytelling that is unique to indigenous peoples (Wright 2006; Rowland 2019, 544). By conceiving “all times” as operating simultaneously, where the past can be found in the present, ‘collapsed history’ eliminates the psychological and physical distances between historical events as conceptualised by a settler framework (Wright 2006; Rowland 2019, 544). The past can therefore be seen as an “agential power capable of transforming the present (and vice versa)” (Rowland 2019, 544). The past can therefore hold a different future that prevents contemporary societies from being located ‘outside of time’ for their supposed similarity to past lifeways, by conceptualising the past as already existing within the present. Following this line of thinking, prehistory can no longer be relegated to a distant past, but rather has to be acknowledged as being a crucial part of the present.

Martin Heidegger explores the way in which the ‘Da-sein’ or ‘being’ is temporal.² He asserts that “the self maintains itself in a certain sameness throughout this constant change of experiences” (Heidegger 1953, 342). The self and its way of being is therefore constructed in relation to the constant of time. Tim Ingold draws on the theory of Ramon Llull to come to a similar conclusion

² It must be noted that Martin Heidegger was a fervent Nazi and anti-Semite. Reference to his work in no-way is intended to support these perspectives. Rather, this works acknowledges that some thinking can stand outside of its original, troubling context to instead, do good.

(Ingold 2015, 115-118). Ingold suggests that rather than *beings*, humans' should be described as *becomings* drawing from Lull's *humanifying* (Ingold 2021, 89). To Ingold, humans are forged by their existence in common life; they become human as they live. Human existence is therefore temporal at its core due to the active role time plays in its creation- whether in the innate sameness that one maintains throughout life, or in the humanifying process. Despite Heidegger's conceptualisation of time as being linear and divided between the two separate poles of birth and death, his conception of being-in-time is useful for a new, non-linear historical model. He states that "the 'between' birth and death already lies *in the being* of Da-sein" (Heidegger 1953, 343). This temporal constitution of time is conceptualised as the 'stretching' of being through life, described as the 'occurrence of Da-sein' (Heidegger 1953, 344). The occurrence of Da-sein can therefore be reappropriated within Ingold's braid and Rifkin's river, whereby life exists within each, and therefore within time; each strand and each water molecule, intimately connected and woven with its neighbour constitutes a *becoming* within time, formed by that which comes before, simultaneously, to that which comes contemporaneously, and in futurity.

When connecting being to time in this way, and explicitly making clear the concept that one exists in time, it becomes necessary to briefly delve into historicity. Heidegger states "to gain an understanding of this connectedness of existence, is to "gain an ontological understanding of historicity" whereby history is grounded in the time that *being* is defined by (Heidegger 1953, 344). In this way, if "historicity is to be illuminated in terms of temporality...then it is essential to this task that it can only be carried out by way of a phenomenological construction" (Heidegger 1953, p. 344). Ways of being in time therefore, act on temporal conceptions that are also influenced by the way history is perceived and constructed. This is crucial to understand in relation to Indigenous Dreaming and other non-settler histories and temporal conceptions, where being-in-time is informed by the phenomenological experience of living the repercussions of narrativized historicities that are embedded in 'all-times'. To conclude, "being is not "temporal " because it "is in history," but because, on the contrary, it exists and can exist historically only because it is temporal in the ground of its being" (Heidegger 1953, p. 345).

It is through the temporal setting of both being-in-time and historicity that duration provides the path forward. Duration can be viewed as the way in which historicity and being-in-time are reconciled; it informs the way one exists in time by orienting historicities within the present. Rifkin describes this process, stating:

Rather than a successive series of presents, each becoming past in turn, being-in-time can be understood as fundamentally oriented. More than simply existing as a unit unto itself, the present bears within itself an impetus born from what's been and directed toward particular goals, ends, horizons. Neither inalterable nor ephemeral, these inclinations contour and animate processes of becoming that have their own trajectories (Rifkin 2017, p. 16-17).

Rifkin describes in this passage the way duration, as the 'impetus born from what's been' or Jackson's *Blind Impress*, informs being-in-time by connecting the historicity of the past and its related goals and horizons with the processes of the present. Duration can be conceptualised as the contact points of the strands of Ingold's braid; of the "always-already-there" of Jackson's *Blind Impress*, where the experiences and 'humanified' elements of past populations translate and become embodied by the phenomenological experience of the 'present'. This shift in historical modelling therefore invalidates the stratigraphic perception of a buried and distinct past. In doing so, however, the onus of the continuation of the primitive trope is placed into the everyday, intersubjective interactions of people. Rifkin therefore questions whether "such life practices be understood as helping to (re)orient existing Indigenous social trajectories but in ways that do not necessarily create a temporal break...from what came before? (Rifkin 2017, p. 15).

In answer to Rifkin's query, concepts of Duration, alongside temporal models that reject linearity such as Jackson's, Ingold's and his own, represent the possibilities for histories that reject temporal breaks, and offer greater inclusion to Indigenous populations to be included in broader world histories. It is ultimately through narrative and storying that the accumulation of time is made present in Duration; the *Blind Impress* manifests itself in the stories and in the embodiment of their values. Narrative is therefore timeless, not bounded by a past or future, and therefore allows the accumulated stories of duration to adapt to new social realities. Not only then does narrative represent an

alternative to linear chronology as a means of better representing *being* and *becoming*, it creates the possibility for a more inclusive history that is fundamentally unable to locate populations ‘outside of time’, for at its core, is the concept that humanity resides within time. Moreover, Van Reybrouck defines savagery as a-temporal. Therefore, if humanity is characterised as residing in time, it cannot be described by any a-temporal descriptors (Van Reybrouck 2012, 63).

CHAPTER THREE

CLASSIFICATION, DATABASES, and DECOLONISATION in MUSEUM CONTEXTS

The previous chapters of this thesis have highlighted the ideals that constitute the primitive trope, and how such ideals have been attached to material culture. They have demonstrated how Papuan and Indigenous communities across the globe have been relegated outside of modernity through the collaboration of ethnoarchaeology, classification and representation of material culture. It is therefore pertinent to demonstrate how the continual existence of these ideals occurs through contemporary classification systems that are still imbued with their colonial legacies.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts that colonialism is realised and regulated through the “formal rules of individual scholarly disciplines and scientific paradigms, and the institutions that support them” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 8). Colonialism is

“...realised in the myriad of representations and ideological constructions of the Other in scholarly and ‘popular’ works, and in the principles which help to select and recontextualise those constructions in such things as the media, official histories and school curricula” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 8).

Museums stand at this juncture between scholarly and popular representation in acting as the bridge between academia and the general public. They espouse official histories and are a point of trusted narratives to the community. The importance of their classification systems is paramount on the basis of this trust, and therefore the power museums hold over public consciousness and understanding: they present 'truth'. In conforming to the ‘formal rules’ of museology, namely in the use of classification systems and standard database software, museums stand to represent First Nations and Pacific cultures in ways that are reflective of the colonial context in which the collections were obtained. Additionally, museums take on the legacy of the anthropological and archaeological traditions of classification, interpretation and knowledge production, and therefore conform to the ‘formal rules’ of these disciplines also.

Tuhiwai Smith comments further that the myriad of representations of these cultures in “colonial encounters” “are different realisations of the underlying rules and codes which frame in the broadest sense what is possible and what is impossible” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 8). In the same way, Deborah Bird Rose comments on the key colonisation process of erasure. Here, Rose makes apparent the centrality of ‘progress’ to ‘civilising’ narratives (Rose 1996, para 8). This western preoccupation with linear ideals of progress was explored in Chapter Two. To Rose, progress is enacted on the basis that on the ‘other’ side of the frontier there is an absence that needs to be transformed. What already exists on the frontier is therefore characterised “as a set of absences”; “there is an absence of production and an absence of civilisation”, and “the concept of progress” is a movement “from absence to presence, from nothing to something” (Rose 1996, para 8). What is therefore impossible, in Tuhiwai Smith’s characterisation of colonialism, is ‘presence’ on the ‘other’ side of the frontier. Delving into classifications of First Nations and Pacific material culture will demonstrate how this perspective is still embedded in collections. This chapter will first describe how the representation of material culture was used as a process of colonisation to dehumanise Indigenous populations. It then explores how a separation becomes apparent between ‘Western’ material and the rest of the globe in classificatory language that serves to continue narratives of difference, embodying the ‘formal rules’ that were once at the fore of the anthropological and archaeological disciplines. This separation dehumanises Pacific and Indigenous peoples, and serves to locate them outside of modernity, continuing a long colonial legacy.

Colonisation and Material Culture

Dan Hicks explores how the transformation of material culture into ‘things’ and ‘objects’ by both museums and markets (and arguably academia and the media), “constitutes a further dimension to the processes of colonialism in its most modern and violent *fin-de-siecle* forms” (Hicks 2020, 180). He suggests that this “transformation of life” ultimately seeks to dehumanise. Though Hicks uses the example of the Pitt Rivers Museum and its impact on dehumanising African peoples, the *chosification*, *containment*, or *mummification*, *statuefication*, and *fetishization* of material culture, to borrow terms from Fanon, Cesaire, and Mbembe respectively, and its dehumanising affects is more

broadly applicable to West Papua. Hicks suggests that beyond the denial of coevalness that Fabian contended in his *Time and the Other*, the chronopolitics of the museum setting and anthropological gaze not only sought to locate indigenous people groups outside of time, but actually contributed to this process in stripping whole cultures of their technologies, and decimating their living landscapes into ruins only to display them for posterity in museums (Fabian 1983; Hicks 2020, 180). Material culture was used as a method of proving the “absence” on the “other” side of the frontier (Rose 1996, para 8). Hicks (2020, 182) asserts “archaeology and anthropology came to be tools for subjugation, through the seizure and display of material culture”. In a similar way, Dutch government officials fetishized Korowai material culture according to anthropological social orders and concepts in order to relegate them to a past era of humanity. Hicks (2020, 189) states “the display of material culture came to stand in for skin as a device for race ‘science’, in a new kind of objectification, of not just decontextualization, but also ‘desubjectification’”. This resonates with Foucault’s state racism, whereby overtime, the defence of the colonial state, originally the Dutch, and then Indonesia, became a defence of society. The biopolitical distinctions that were reinforced by the representations of Papuan material culture ensure that Indonesian control is protected due to the narrative that it is ‘civilising’ Papuans, and represents the ‘true’ way of life. Whilst Hicks speaks in the context of museum collections and exhibitions, he comments that the displays had the effect of showing “an ancient living culture freshly destroyed, as if it were nothing but archaeological remains” (Hicks 2020, 185). In the same way, government officials and the tourism industry, aided by anthropological language and concepts, frame West Papuans like the Korowai as living relics, with no place in their current form in modernity. Such representations foster the perspective that their lifeways need changing, and that they are incompatible with the global economy and western world. Indeed, material culture is exhibited or represented in order to place it in the past, to “reinforce the image of a future-oriented European victory over ‘primitive’, archaeological...cultures” (Hicks 2020, 185). While Hicks makes this reference in relation to African cultures and their display in the context of extractive, corporate militarism, it is applicable to colonial contexts as well. It demonstrates the role material culture plays in identifying ‘past’ lifeways that are sold to the public as primitive and incommensurate with modern life. Material culture is therefore actively used “as a tool, or weapon,

to create difference”; as a “measurement of the distance of non-Western cultures to the West, “one object at a time” (Hicks 2020, 183- 184).

A Sydney Context

In order to understand the state of classification and exhibition in museums in an Australian context, interviews were conducted with two Sydney-based curators: Dr Jenny Newell and Dr Jude Philp. Dr Jenny Newell is the Curator of Climate Change Projects at the Australian Museum. She works with climate change narratives and their cultural dimensions in Pacific and Australian communities. Dr Jude Philp is Senior Curator of the Macleay collections at the Chau Chak Wing Museum. She is primarily interested in the history and culture of the Pacific, with additional experience in museum practice, and natural history collections. A semi-formal interview with each allowed conversation to branch off from stepping points centred on exhibition practice, classification, and museum epistemology. These interviews were able to answer questions about the state of decolonisation processes in the two museums, the contemporary practices involved in exhibition design for Pacific and First Nations collections, and potential pathways forward for better practice. All quotations in the following paragraphs have come from these interviews and are used with the informed consent of the participants.

Dr Jenny Newell describes the process of representing the material culture of First Nations and Pacific communities at the Australian Museum as being guided by the concept of “how best”: how best can we represent this community? How best can we gain “access to those voices we need to hear? How best can we “represent community effectively in the ways they would want to be represented”? Newell emphasises that all exhibitions within the Australian Museum that represent Pacific or First Nations groups are co-created. She commented, that “if [museums are] going to be representing First Nations people they have to be co-created with those people... you can’t just step in and decide how you’re going to represent a whole other culture”. Similarly, Dr Jude Philp asserted “people are at the centre of all of all this; it’s not an object that is disassociated from this, it’s people centred”. As such, “you are forced to, by necessity, talk to people”. Co-creation of exhibitions ultimately gives agency to the communities whose material culture is being presented, disrupting the

cycle of colonial representation and power structures. It prevents the basis of material cultural representation from being enacted on difference, consequently preventing museums from acting as a tool of colonisation (Hicks 2020, 183-184). Trish Luker, speaking in the context of archives, suggests decolonisation “may be thought of as attempts to dislodge settler colonial records as exclusive sites of historical knowledge by engaging in ‘historically-informed critical decolonial sensibility’” (Luker 2017, 111; Fraser and Todd 2016, para 2). By placing exhibition design into the hands of the communities whose material culture is to be represented, control is given back to the objects rightful and original owners. It places people at the centre of heritage, rather than narratives about them, and prevents the continuation of negative tropes through fostering self-determination. These are important realisations for decolonising projects, and attest to the climate within state museums that now acknowledge the importance of co-creation.

Considering the historic tradition of locating non-western societies within a framework of linear development, it was refreshing to have Dr Jude Philp emphasise the contemporaneity of history. She reminds us that history is not a linear entity and we need to “recognise the contemporary of anything that we might call history”. She comments that representations of objects are not based in their “past history”, instead recognising that museums display “part of [an objects’] history that’s articulated today in a very specific way”. In this way, Philp makes clear that museums need to be engaging with the present, whether “we’re doing history or not”. Narratives and storytelling are crucial in establishing such forms of engagement. Newell believes that personal stories create the greatest opportunity, stating “I think that’s what has the most impact on people”. Philp remarked that when you speak to community members about their material culture “that person has a particular trajectory of history and they have chosen specific things to tell me at this time”. As a result, “that makes what you’re saying very current, because it has to be of, and has to recognise, this time”. For Philp, representation of material culture is ultimately “the art of listening” in being able to “hear from people and understand their concerns” and act accordingly. Co-creation therefore affords the opportunity to disrupt linear narratives of history by centring objects in the present, and focusing on their relationships with people, places, and time itself.

It is important to note that the audience is a critical part of the museum. Newell highlighted the difficulty that arises out of audience assumptions. Museums cannot control the frame of mind and previous experiences of their visitors. As such, the possibility exists for visitors to interpret exhibitions and collections within primitivist frameworks that are pre-existing within their own consciousness. Newell suggests that museums and their curators hope that their representation of cultural items helps to dislodge such perspectives. She stated, “we open up ways for people to learn, and listen, in our exhibition spaces”, that the “way we present that kind of message is hopefully helping people to shake off their primitive ways”. While making this statement, Newell refers to the combination of modern technology with messages about First Nations and Indigenous communities. She describes that the Australian Museum curators aim to present First Nations and Indigenous cultural material using a “modern medium” rather than simple collections of artefacts. The aim is to have Indigenous knowledge and cultural material seen as being part of the present. This does suggest that a general public will relegate a grouping of First Nations or Indigenous cultural material as not belonging in the present, or to the future, if it is not represented with technology considered ‘modern’. Jenny suggested “if you’ve got imagery or messages being presented by First Nations people using all this modern tech, then that probably helps” in shifting primitivist frameworks. The ultimate aim of the Australian Museum in their exhibition design is to “make sure we don’t show really static white perceptions of Indigenous communities here”. This becomes evident in climate change spaces. Jenny was involved in the creation of the Changing Climate exhibit which incorporates both Western and Indigenous knowledges on climate change solutions. When asked about the tendency for museums to preference to Western knowledge over Pacific and First Nations knowledges, Jenny remarked that though the practice certainly existed, “it’s a slow process, but a really exciting one” to overturn it. She spoke about the development of the Burra Learning Space at the Australian Museum, and the way songlines are being used to connect a variety of ontologies and epistemologies together. This is undoubtedly a move in a positive direction in incorporating the various epistemologies and knowledges available in Australia into institutions where the public can see themselves reflected. It does however, create a point of friction that has yet to be acknowledged in and by the museum itself.

This friction exists between the ways Pacific and Indigenous material culture have been displayed in the past to demonstrate a closeness to nature that has justified ‘civilising’ attempts, and current trends in presenting Indigenous lifeways as pathways forward for industrial societies. What was once viewed as a sign of “savagery” is now represented as a method of combatting climate change. Newell describes how Indigenous Australian knowledges on caring for Country are presented as “time tested” methods and “long term science” to the general public. Whilst this is crucial in helping to combat the legacy of ethnoarchaeology in demonstrating the advancement of Indigenous populations, it also fails to acknowledge the detriment that historic European representation of these practices caused. If we are to benefit from these knowledges, we need to acknowledge our role in how they were used to oppress communities, and therefore, the grace by which Traditional Knowledge Holders share the information with us now.

The complexity of museum representation was highlighted in the interviews, with the two curators emphasising the need to move away from depicting Pacific and First Nations culture in light of tragedy and loss. Newell and Philp both highlighted the complexity of demonstrating the “real and highly devastating results” of European imagination and action, whilst trying to move away from narratives of loss into narratives of continuance. Philp describes attempts by the Chau Chak Wing Museum to “liberate objects from their histories and put them into this forward momentum” providing the example of the ‘Ambassador’ in their Natural Selections exhibit. This portion of the exhibition aims to highlight the entanglement of the Macleay family, the loss of traditional Country, and collection practices with the ongoing cultural traditions of the Wiradjuri people. The overall narrative presented is one of strength through the use of MP Linda Burney’s maiden address to the House of Representatives alongside a shield, and interpretive panels detailing how the Shield People protected other nations during colonisation. This narrative therefore recognises the hardship and devastation present in the Wiradjuri history, but is able to frame it in a story of strength and resilience rather than of loss. It is also important to note that this is accomplished through the Wiradjuri language which names the shield and transcribes Linda Burney’s speech. The success of this exhibit attests to Philp’s statement that “without understanding the society of its time, but also how we

understand those things now, you do not understand anything about them”. Without the input of Aboriginal Australian voices, such as curator Matt Poll, and the inclusion of local language, historical and contemporary Aboriginal society could not have been represented accurately or appropriately.

The interviews conducted with Dr Jenny Newell and Dr Jude Philp and summarized above, convey the climate of decolonisation at two Sydney-based museums. Both curators emphasised the positive attitudes towards co-creation of exhibitions, and stressed the changes occurring in museums regarding the representation of First Nations and Pacific material. Whilst these physical exhibition spaces may be examples of best-practice, it does not mean that these institutions have no change left to undergo.

Classification and Deep Colonising

The language of classification plays a large role in the process of locating non-Western cultures outside of time. Deborah Bird Rose uses the term ‘deep colonising’ to describe the continuing existence of colonial practices within institutions that are “meant to reverse processes of colonisation” (Rose 1996, para 3). Rose describes that such practices are not “negligible side effects of essentially benign endeavours” (Rose 1996, para 4). It is their embeddedness which “may conceal, naturalise, or marginalise continuing colonising practices” (Rose 1996, para 4). Whilst Rose mostly deals with legal institutions, the ideas encompassed by ‘deep colonising’ can be extended outside of this initial legal focus. Comments from curators Newell and Philip make it evident that contemporary Australian museums are undoubtedly undergoing decolonial processes, and progress has undeniably been made. This is not to say however, that colonial processes have ceased entirely in these institutions. Bowker and Star state: “there is more at stake – epistemologically, politically, and ethically – in the day to day work of building classification systems and producing and maintaining standards than in abstract arguments about representation” (Bowker and Star 2000, 10). It is in the everyday processes that lie, seemingly benign, beneath the grand abstractions and interpretations of information panels and academic articles that continuing harm occurs to Indigenous and First Nations groups across the globe. Whilst representation is undoubtedly important in museum spaces

and exhibitions in discussions of decolonisation, the base classification systems of museum are equally so. It is these systems that inform that labelling and interpretation of material culture that then occupies the walls of the galleries of these museums. Given their centrality to museum narratives, it is pertinent to explore the colonial legacy embedded in classification systems of museum collections.

On a purely logistical level, categories are used as practical classification activities in order to facilitate the standardisation that is required by a database system (Beltrame 2012, 3). Their existence is therefore necessary to current database software for indexing purposes. To simply eradicate the categories would be impossible, and impractical; perhaps even serving to erase the cultural ties and social lives of the objects in question through casting them into a disarray made meaningless by a total lack of order. The question then becomes: who decides these categories, and what meaning do these categories imbue into the objects they describe? David Williams notes that at the establishment of an institution, a new information management system will be created or adopted “based primarily on the whims of the person – a registrar or curator – responsible for the dealing with the records” (Williams 2010, 15). He documents that as an institution grows, so too do its records, usually resulting in a backlog of entries, and inaccessible records (Williams 2010, 15). Computerised information systems arrived at museums in the 1960s and partially responded to these issues (Williams 2010, 16). Information was able to be found more quickly, however greater standardisation was necessary for indexing, and any current museum can attest to ongoing backlogs of entries (Williams 2010, 16). Additionally, the human element of data entry still perseveres, maintaining the impact of the individual on classification of objects. The question of who decides these categories is answered by a collaboration of classification legacies and standardisation, and individual agency. Scientific legacies become evident in classification practices, where Indigenous knowledges are more likely to be presented as “cultural” and as “small facts” rather than scientific information from an alternate epistemology and ontology (Lilje and Philp 2021, 188).

The extent to which embedded colonial processes can naturalise oppression is evident in bureaucratic record keeping such as object records. This “is a technology of control” where “settler colonial

nations produce administrative records for national purposes in the affirmation of sovereignty” (Luker 2017, 112). Fiona Cameron noted in 2005, that “the rate that museum data [has] been brought online has not been reciprocated by the critical evaluation of the actual significance or utility of the data” (Cameron 2005, 244). This remains true today. As such, outdated classifications, based on colonial constructs continue to not only be used, but made available to the public. In an environment where it is at the level of individual object records that “conventional and totalising practices take root”, it is of critical importance that the entries in museum's online collections management systems are critiqued and updated. Livio Sansone also recognises the importance of indexing, suggesting that major cultural institutions "must review their collections, and change their indexing systems" (Sansone 2013, 263). In this particular instance, Sansone calls for institutions to include index terms such as "race or colour, racism, Negro, Afro-Brazilian, and Africa” (Sansone 2013, 263). This would allow these institutions to more accurately document the racist modern and contemporary events and memories that are part of the daily lives of people in Brazil. Such revision of indexing could be extended to most settings around the world, and is but one example of how categories can change the way object histories are approached. Classifications such as these becomes increasingly important in digital spaces that are now often more easily accessible to the general public than physical exhibition spaces.

Digital Collections

‘Digital heritage’ or ‘digital cultural heritage’ is a diasporic discipline, or post-discipline, due to its wide and varied application (Parry 2010, 3-4). Crossing through disciplines of heritage, archaeology, anthropology, information technology, and museology, digital heritage has existed for five decades, documenting and researching the impact of computer systems and information technology on the world of heritage. Digital heritage can refer to the response of museums to the digital age, to digitised materials, or even to heritage produced by the digital age (Parry 2010, 3-4). This section will draw on the discipline at its juncture with classification systems.

Digital museums are offering a reversal of the museological tradition of dividing the world into that which is researched and collected, and that which analyses and displays (Sansone 2013). They have

been built within the decolonial space, and as such, digital collections have the powerful ability to build on that tradition. Online collections have the potential, as digital museums, to “stimulat[e] the use of the social memories of ethnic minorities and social movements, and of national memory in general” (Sansone 2013, 262). The example of the Digital Museum of African and Afro-Brazilian Memory offered by Sansone attests to the way these digital spaces can act as a “democratising zone in which relations of otherness and constructions of identity are produced” (Sansone 2013, 262). Tiziana Beltrame rightly states that “it is necessary to acknowledge the reconfiguration of social ties occurring as a result of the categorisation of the information infrastructure” (Beltrame 2012, 6). This is because the reconfiguration can work to both positive and negative ends. Currently in many museums, “the functional taxonomy built in order to access the data” is based in outdated classifications which then merge “with the classifications put in place by the curators to organise the information” (Beltrame 2012, 4). Consequently, interpretation is built upon colonial legacies. Sansone emphasises that digital collections are, by their “very nature”, “easily accessible, dynamic, and interactive” devices (Sansone 2013, 262).

In a search of the Australian Museum’s online collections for the term ‘traditional’, 144 objects are listed. Not a single item from this list was collected from a ‘European’ or ‘Western’ origin. In each instance, ‘traditional’ is used to describe either lands, art, weaponry, or adornment. The contextual use of the word appears to refer to a people group prior to their interaction with the ‘west’. It is used as a ‘catch-all’ to represent lifeways of communities throughout the world that are perceived to have existed as part of a cultural whole. This becomes problematic for the same reasons that functionalist anthropology has been critiqued. The word ‘traditional’ in these object listings implies that there was an ethnographic present in existence at some unidentified point in the past, where cultures were bounded and singular. Additionally, the only cultures represented in these listings by the world ‘traditional’ are those historically considered ‘hunter-gatherer’, ‘tribal’ or even ‘primitive’. A search of the word ‘historic’ in the same database however, will result in listings from across the globe, with provenances from ‘western’ societies. A division has therefore occurred in the collections management between historical artefacts, classifying them as either historic or traditional depending

on their origin. By framing the past as something lesser than, the nation is encouraged to draw on and 'live up to' the 'new' ideals of the nation state, thereby reinforcing and securing the identity of the nation in the present (Ahmed 2014, 101-121). In acting to separate the historical narratives of Western and non-Western cultures, an implicit comment is made that characterised non-Western cultures as outside of the history. Their histories are represented as not part of the 'new' ideals of the nation state, and are therefore presented as backward; remnants of a past and culture that have no place in the present, in any appropriated form, and little relation to the nation's history. Irony lies in the continuity that the word traditional suggests; the ongoing handing down of information, and the perpetuation of culture. The word traditional has been used to separate Indigenous and First Nations material culture from that of the 'West' in order to exclude its creators from modernity. Yet the very word chosen to deliver this end, communicates the resilience and presence of these communities in the present.

A systematic review of collections management systems needs to occur to deeply interrogate why certain objects are labelled traditional, and others labelled as historic. As long as this distinction occurs, moral attachments of the primitive trope continue, disenfranchising cultural objects. Beltrame asserts that "it is the construction of the indexed data that gives life to the computerised object" (Beltrame 2012, 16). Cameron expands on the work of Marshall McLuhan and Paul Marty to also highlight that "information systems can be viewed as organic, evolving with society or the organization they support, defining it as much as they are defined by it" (Cameron 2005, p. 244; McLuhan 1964; Marty 1999). This gives agency to the database to shape and re-shape the meanings embodied in the objects in its collection. When objects are categorised only by their function, it removes their social lives and their cultural context which was previously enmeshed in areas of life far exceeding their function. The material culture in these databases, particularly that of First Nation or Indigenous groups, has historically been used to categorise and justify these societies as 'primitive', predominantly through the form of function. Continuing to classify these objects within this framework, perpetuates such a trope. Therefore, following Beltrame's perspective that the construction of data gives life to objects, within a database that carries historic legacies of

problematic tropes, there is the ability for these meanings to be re-shaped within a new decolonial context that does not rely on functionalist categories.

When Dr Jude Philp was asked about the word ‘traditional’, she remarked that “it’s everywhere”, and that she tried to stop herself from using it. She recognised that the word was most often used when trying to make generalisations, and cautioned that for meaningful representation, it is necessary to be specific. She astutely commented “being able to listen and decide on our use, dependent on how other people talk about themselves in the general context is what we have to do better”. Sansone, on writing about digital memory and collections in Brazil states: “it is necessary to reflect more closely on the interface between technology and the way we remember, celebrate, choose, and organise our ideas as much in our own minds and thoughts as in relation to those of others” (Sansone 2013, 264-265). To co-create object records and collections management systems with the communities whose material culture they describe and house would serve to decolonise this space which is still populated by colonial legacies. In this setting, a participant relationship model that recognises parallel provenance and the co-creation of objects (by the community who created the cultural material, and the institution who transformed it into an artefact), would be beneficial in disrupting the typical power dynamic of object classification (Luker 2017, 113; Iacovino 2010, 360). It would allow for ‘the social life of things’ to be more fully recognised as objects move “through different categories- art, artefact, gift, commodity and so forth – over the course of their biographies” through connecting the objects back to their creators and communities (Foster 2012, 131; Appadurai 1986). The data that would then be produced and consumed by the public would be entirely informed by active participants of their culture, rather than by outsiders. This data would more fully realise the existence of hybrid objects, and the embeddedness of cultural artefacts within contact zones spanning geography, collection practices, social exchange, and temporal settings (Clifford 1988, 1997; Foster 2012, 131). Kathy Bowery and Jane Anderson also importantly note that “the principle of freedom of access fails to recognise the way decontextualisation and disembodiment of cultural objects outside of local context can serve against Indigenous interests”. Co-creation of the classification of these objects would limit this decontextualisation by actively recontextualising them

in their community. It would also ensure that classifications and access are appropriate according to cultural protocols. Bowery and Anderson also note that “important information is often missing and institutions may use information for digitisation based on culturally inappropriate classificatory grids. This results in reproduction of ‘old colonial frameworks’” (Bowery and Anderson 2009, 494). This alludes to Rose’s deep colonising, and the way that colonial processes continue to be embedded in spaces that are supposedly undergoing decolonisation. Reworking these classification systems, and critically interrogating the historic labels of objects alongside the communities from which these objects have come disrupts these colonial processes, and allows for decolonisation to occur.

Esme Ward, Director of the Manchester Museum, suggests that “care underpins the work of all museums” (Ward 2020, para 8). In an open letter following the repatriation of 43 items from the British institution to Aboriginal communities in Australia, Ward comments that “we are reimagining a new ethics of care for museums that extends beyond collections to people, ideas, beliefs and relationships” (Ward 2020, para 8). By reconnecting communities with the objects of their heritage, museums are better able to care for both. By providing the agency of classifying their objects with their own categories, more meaningful representations can occur that benefit all involved. When speaking on repatriation, Tristram Besterman, the previous Director of the Manchester Museum remarked:

this is about building human relationships and what is repatriated invisibly to the source community is dignity, respect and autonomy. We are in the privileged position to offer more than words and empty gestures, that is the special preserve of museums – we have objects and collections to return (Besterman in Ward 2020, para 12).

I believe that Besterman’s words can apply to object management collections also, where the role of classifying is given back to communities rather than relying on historic indexes. Returning the classification and labelling of heritage back to communities returns sovereignty and respect, in a true climate of decolonisation.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown that the primitive trope continues to influence academic and public conceptions and representations of the ‘other’. In Chapter One, I began with an overview of the development of the primitive trope in order to identify its continuation. Without understanding the colonial context of its development, the harmful impacts of its contemporary metonyms cannot be understood. Exploring this development, I moved through the history of the trope and its intersection with the anthropology and archaeology disciplines. This served to emphasise the power relations inherent within colonial classifications and reveal the intimate connection between material culture and ‘primitive’ classifications.

Delving deeper into how both past and contemporary populations are continued to be labelled ‘primitive’, Chapter Two discusses and critiques linear models of history and the use of analogy in ethnoarchaeology. These temporalities and methodologies enforce that particular people continue to be located ‘outside of time’, which ultimately oppresses and occludes societies from participation in ‘modernity’. This shows how linking present societies to the past creates moral inferences of backwardness that have repercussions for societies and groups of people today, and in the past. In order to move forward towards decolonisation, I presented alternative models of history that stem from post-human critiques, and intersubjective, phenomenological, and entanglement thinking. Analysing the impact of academic models and practices in public spaces, Chapter Three focuses on how the primitive trope is engrained in museum collections and public displays through particular classifications and categorisations derived from disciplines such as anthropology and archaeology.

Building upon this thesis, further research needs to occur into how museums can represent colonial collections from perspectives of strength and resilience rather than loss and trauma. A balance needs to be struck where museums are held accountable to their histories, and actively speak the truth of their actions, alongside the celebration of continuing cultures. Moreover, a more extensive, coded literature review of academic works using the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘tribal’ would allow for statistical analysis to provide data on the most frequent use-contexts. Similarly, access to the back-

end databases of multiple museums beyond what is available online would allow for a more comprehensive study of classification systems in object management. Moreover, in-depth comparison of classifications used in physical exhibitions and those used in the digital databases of the same museums would also reveal the embedded colonial legacies in spaces beyond those immediately interacted with by the public. More collaboration with First Nations, Indigenous, and Pacific curators is necessary to ascertain classificatory frameworks, and to replace the use of indexing such as ‘traditional’ and ‘tribal’. This is suggested while recognising that in some cases these terms may be deemed appropriate by the material’s custodians.

My thesis and the additional work suggested above underline that, rather than a mere abstraction, the ‘primitive’ classification is a reality for many communities across the globe. The first two chapters emphasise the real-world impact of these harmful classifications on the people of West Papua. Following the practice of the Dutch colonial government and its agents, the subsequent Indonesian government, the tourism industry, as well as international museums have selectively been emphasising metonyms of the primitive trope, thereby characterising Papuans as living in a way that is incommensurable with modernity and making them absent of participation with the global economy. This is obviously a wholly untrue picture, especially when one considers the many ways Papuans have maintained their autonomy and navigated their global connections through subversion and appropriation of colonial tropes.

First Nations and Pacific peoples have been critiquing colonial classifications from the beginning (see for example Thomas 1991). Indigenous scholars, but especially artists have been among the most influential in shifting Eurocentric perceptions, in both academic and public spaces. For example, Lisa Reihana’s (2015) work, *in Pursuit of Venus* re-examines and critiques European narratives of the colonisation of the Pacific. Reihana deconstructs encounters between Europeans and Polynesians, framed on European wallpapers, in a major video project. In doing so, she critiques the paradisaical trope and takes back the cultural identity that was re-shaped by colonial representations. Similarly, Yuki Kihara (2021) has reimagined a series of Gauguin paintings in the form of tableau photos and an episodic talk show series. This recreation disrupts colonial

representation of the ideal Pacific ‘beauty’ trope and explores the Fa’afafine, or Samoan third gender community. These examples highlight the way that colonial tropes have been adapted and re-claimed by Indigenous artists and communities like the Korowai. Further collaboration, co-creation, and support of Indigenous academics and artists will create more meaningful decolonisation efforts within and outside museum spaces.

As the work of museum curators Dr Jenny Newell and Dr Jude Philp shows, through collaboration and co-creation, decolonisation is possible in a way that respects communities and their heritage. “Caring” is at the forefront of such initiatives, collaborations, and museum practices. When asked what a ‘caring’ museum looks like to her, Newell replied: “a caring institution is one that’s willing to change, and willing to be adapting what it does, and the way it thinks to better provide...the kinds of learning and the kinds of pathways that people might need in order to better care for themselves, and their communities and their country”. It is “open and is thinking actively about how to care more effectively for the people who it represents, for the plants and animals, land, and waterways it represents, and to the future it is directed towards”. I believe this institution is within our reach.

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