ARTISTIC MEANING AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS:
THEMES OF GENDER AND TIME IN
FOREIGN IMAGING OF NI-VANUATU MATERIAL CULTURE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE

DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

ART

AUGUST 2005

By
Carla Hostetter

Thesis Committee:

Deborah Waite, Chairperson
Lewis Andrews
Katerina Teaiwa
This paper will explore foreign meanings assigned to textiles from the island nation of Vanuatu through a close reading of foreign still photography. Specific photos will be investigated as historical texts of the photographer’s interpretation of the textiles. My intention here is to demonstrate that photos can reveal the photographer’s visual re-ordering of the physical world of material culture. In this research it will become clear that meaning is assigned to Ni-Vanuatu textiles as they are re-imaged or re-ordered within the context of the photographer’s/ interpreter’s visual and conceptual frameworks. This task will be accomplished through a close visual analysis of specific foreign individuals’ still photos of Ni-Vanuatu textiles placed within the context of their written work. This contextualization will reveal the limitations of the photographer, thereby showing the deliberate choices they have made in their framing of the textiles.

The aim of the paper is primarily to suggest that still photos may be approached as direct visual representations of an individual’s ordering of the physical/ social world. At the same time I wish to switch the focus of current photographic research away from analysis of foreign interpretation/ representations of Pacific women’s bodies, towards foreign interpretation/ representations of Pacific women’s productions. This focus will add more to an understanding of the contemporary context in Vanuatu as women negotiate post-colonial spaces in order to be recognized as productive members of their communities. Finally, as ‘artifacts’ are often used as markers of temporal location, I hope to explore the role of conceptualizations of time and space in foreign interpretations/ representations of textiles from Vanuatu.

Throughout this work particular attention will be paid to two major themes. First, I will focus on the concepts of gender, as textiles represent women’s primary contribution to the material culture of their communities. Many foreigners have very fixed perceptions of gender that play into their interpretation of the textiles and as such can be found in their photography of the works. Secondly, I would also like to address the foreigners’ perceptions of time and space. This theme may be relevant in two ways. As photos reproduce a single moment into infinity, at the same time foreigner’s concepts of time factor largely into the way they envision the physical world and particularly their interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu material culture.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................. iii

List of Figures ......................................................................................................... v

Introductions ......................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1. Beginnings of Interpretation and Representation;  
The Renderings of William Hodges ................................................................. 17

Chapter 2. Clothing and Conversion to Christianity;  
The Photography of James Hay Lawrie ............................................................ 39

Chapter 3. Science, Sexuality and Style in Art and Dress;  
The Photography of Felix Speiser ................................................................. 64

Chapter 4. Savages Images and Invisible Textiles  
The Photography of Martin and Osa Johnson ................................................. 97

Chapter 5. The Tourist Dollar, Development and Depictions of Textiles  
The Photography of Tourism ........................................................................... 119

Chapter 6. The Re-Valuing of Women’s Contributions;  
The Photography of Lissant Bolton ................................................................. 143

Conclusions ....................................................................................................... 164

Bibliography ..................................................................................................... 168
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Landing at Mallicolo, Hodges ....................................................... 34
Figure 2: The Landing at Erromanga, Hodges .................................................... 34
Figure 3: Composition Drawing, Ciprian ............................................................. 35
Figure 4: View in the Island and Tanna, Hodges, Engraved by Woollett .......... 35
Figure 5: Man of the Island of Mallicolo, Hodges ............................................. 36
Figure 6: Man of the Island of Mallicolo, Hodges ............................................. 36
Figure 7: Man of the Island of Mallicolo, Hodges Engraved by J. Caldwell .... 37
Figure 8: Man of the Island of Mallicolo, Hodges Engraved by J. Caldwell .... 37
Figure 9: Man of Tana, Hodges ........................................................................... 38
Figure 10: Woman of the Island of Tana, Hodges .............................................. 38
Figure 11: 'Photograph # 15 Native of Tanna 1891', Lawrie ......................... 59
Figure 12: 'Photograph # 16 Native of Native of Tanna 1891', Lawrie .......... 59
Figure 13: Erromangan woman in traditional dress, Robertson .................... 60
Figure 14: Photo # 21 Washing day Aneityum 1891, Lawrie ............................ 60
Figure 15: Photo #9 Tanna Natives- West Coast 1891, Lawrie ...................... 61
Figure 16: Photo #10 Natives of Tanna, Lawrie ............................................... 61
Figure 17: Photo # 22 A Futunese family 1891, Lawrie ................................... 62
Figure 18: Photo # 1 Natives of Tanna 1884, Lawrie ....................................... 62
Figure 19: Photo #18 Natives of Tanna Partly Civilized 1891, Lawrie ........... 63
Figure 20: Photo #25 Civilized Natives Aneityum, Lawrie ............................... 63
Figure 21: Plate 43, Speiser .................................................................................. 89
Figure 22: Plate 46 Figures 4 and 5, Speiser ....................................................... 89
Figure 23: Plate 2 Figure 1, Speiser ..................................................................... 90
Figure 24: Plate 5 Figure 3, Speiser .................................................................... 90
Figure 25: Plate 4 Figure 5, Speiser .................................................................... 91
Figure 26: Plate 4 Figure 8, Speiser .................................................................... 91
Figure 27: Plate 8 Figure 2, Speiser .................................................................... 92
Figure 28: Plate 7 Figure 2, Speiser .................................................................... 92
Figure 29: Plate 90, Speiser ................................................................................ 93
Figure 30: Plate 71, Speiser ................................................................................. 93
Figure 31: Plate 49, Speiser ................................................................................ 94
Figure 32: Plate 105 Figure 2, Speiser ................................................................. 94
Figure 33: Plate 74, Speiser ................................................................................ 95
Figure 34: Plate 73, Speiser ................................................................................ 95
Figure 35: Plate 18 Figure 1, Speiser ................................................................. 96
Figure 36: Plate 42 Figure 11, 12 and 13, Speiser ............................................ 96
Figure 37: 'Nagapate', Martin Johnson ............................................................... 115
Figure 38: 'Longhead mother and child- New Hebrides', Martin Johnson .... 115
Figure 39: 'Wo-Bang-An-Ar', Martin Johnson .................................................. 116
Figure 40: 'The Painted Dancers of Southwest Bay', Martin Johnson ......... 116
Figure 41: 'The Old Head-Curer', Martin Johnson ............................................ 117
Figure 42: 'Tomman Women, Showing Gap in Teeth', Martin Johnson ....... 117
Figure 43: 'Nagapate Among the Devil-Devils', Martin Johnson ................. 118
Figure 44: 'Women of the Big Numbers', Martin Johnson ............................. 118
Figure 45: Cover of Vanuatu, Hermann ......................................................... 136
Figure 46: Inside Cover of Vanuatu, Hermann ........................................... 136
Figure 47: Inside Cover of Tahiti, Hermann ............................................... 136
Figure 48: Port Vila Market, Hermann ....................................................... 137
Figure 49: Mask of South Malikolo, Hermann ......................................... 138
Figure 50: Man leaving Port Vila Shop, Hermann ....................................... 139
Figure 51: Tonkinese Woman leaving Port Vila Building, Hermann ............ 139
Figure 52: Man Raising Flag in ‘Toward Independence’, Hermann ............... 140
Figure 53: Women Sweeping in ‘Toward Independence’, Hermann ............. 140
Figure 54: Mat and Man in ‘the arts’, Hermann ......................................... 141
Figure 55: Air Melanesia in ‘Norsup’, Hermann ......................................... 141
Figure 56: Big Nambas Woman in ‘Norsup’, Hermann ............................... 142
Figure 57: Gwana mat with vule pattern, Bolton ....................................... 158
Figure 58: Singo tuvegi, Bolton ................................................................. 158
Figure 59: Mataitalai Plaiting, Bolton ........................................................ 159
Figure 60: Margaret Solomon Weaving, Bolton ......................................... 159
Figure 61: Women of Lolovoli, Bolton ........................................................ 160
Figure 62: Women Presenting Mats, Bolton ............................................... 160
Figure 63: Woman holding textile, Ni-Vanuatu publication ........................ 161
Figure 64: Women holding textiles, Ni-Vanuatu publication ....................... 161
Figure 65: Workshop in Ambae, Ni-Vanuatu publication ............................. 162
Figure 66: Opening of a Workshop, Ni-Vanuatu publication ....................... 162
Figure 67: Man Holding Mat, Ni-Vanuatu publication ............................... 162
Figure 68: Bolton, Ni-Vanuatu publication ................................................ 163
Introductions
Introductions

This project on photography actually stems from my interest in Pacific clothing. Two years ago I began to explore Pacific Island art and was drawn to the subject of textiles and clothing. I think this fascination was due, in part, to the idea that clothing can represent the physical embodiment of social definitions and boundaries which literally and metaphorically envelop our bodies and thus shape our personal experiences in our material and social worlds. It seemed to me that as clothing makes physical community norms so do our bodies make physical our personal experiences. The act of wearing clothing represents, in essence, these two intangible concepts physically rubbing up against one another.

As I mulled over this way of viewing clothing, I was instantly attracted to textiles/fabrics/clothing from the nation of Vanuatu. Admittedly, this initial appeal was purely based in aesthetics as the plaited pandanus textiles of Vanuatu are, in my opinion, some of the most beautiful in existence. As I continued to explore the many forms of fabric that emerge from these islands, I began to recognize not only their beauty but also their significance in diverse historical contexts. They figure largely in myths, achievement societies, conversion to Christianity and contemporary gender roles. I found these issues to still be relevant today as Ni-Vanuatu women continue to negotiate the way they personally experience their social and political worlds through clothing. In fact, it has recently been reported through a Fijian women’s organization that a ban has taken place in Vanuatu which prohibits women from wearing pants or traosis in some communities. This report further enticed me to explore the connections between clothing and perceptions of gender.

The question you are probably now asking is how did interests in Ni-Vanuatu clothing and gender lead to a project on foreign imaging, in particular, photography? Well, as I started to explore the various forms of fabrics, textiles and clothing I, like all scholars,
began to investigate what other foreign researchers had seen in these materials. I am here purposefully using the term ‘foreign’ in order to avoid the associations made with the somewhat more loaded descriptions of foreign travelers as ‘Westerners’ or ‘Outsiders.’ At the same time as I was exploring these images of Ni-Vanuatu textiles, I had also been reading the theoretical writings of Elizabeth Edwards on anthropology and photography which, along with Margaret Jolly’s work on gender in Vanuatu, soon became one of my two major sources of inspiration for this project. And indeed I did begin to view these photos as a valuable source of information. The first thing that struck me, however, was how different all the photos of the same subject looked, and how none presented me with the view of textiles as socially shaping personal experience. Each photographer I looked to seemed to frame the textiles in a completely distinctive manner. I was unable to gain one consistent or cohesive image of textiles in their original contexts. In fact there were as many various types of framings as there were different interpretations of the textiles. Thus, I became thoroughly fascinated with the idea that the foreign photos visually display not just the material form of the textile off which light bounces to produce the image, but instead I saw the very visual ordering of the physical world by the foreigner themselves. In this way, when looking at a photograph of a Ni-Vanuatu textile I was not seeing the textile nor its original context nor its intrinsic meaning; rather I was face to face with the photographer’s interpretation of that textile. I was directly experiencing how one specific foreign person saw the Ni-Vanuatu textile in front of him/her.

In this project I aim to explore how foreigners have seen Ni-Vanuatu textiles and how these interpretations are revealed in their photography. Therefore, I will be reading the photos themselves as textual records of the foreigner’s visual experiences with materials from Vanuatu. From this close reading I think we will be able to see that the foreign
interpretations and the resulting photos reflect the person’s conceptual frameworks which have been pre-formed as they were socialized in their own communities. These frameworks have created a visual ordering of the material world that is specific to a particular individual. When this individual sees a new physical form, such as a Ni-Vanuatu textile, it must be placed within his existing framework or visual ordering of the world. This is how a textile is interpreted and given new meaning in the eyes of a foreigner. The photos reveal to us this placement in the foreigner's visual world. Nicholas Thomas has written on material or object-based interactions between Pacific and Western communities in *Entangled Objects* (1991). Thomas' text traces the exchange of objects between Pacific and colonial populations, outlining how the identity or meaning of an object shifts in every new context. Objects become something new every time they are recontextualized. Thomas states that 'objects are not what they are made to be but what they have become.' (1991: 4) In my project, textiles are not recontextualized through *physical* exchange, but rather, they are *re-imaged,* or *re-ordered* within the context of foreigners' visual frameworks which are directly represented in the photo of the object. Following Thomas' line of thought, objects form a new identity within the context of the foreign gaze and the photo.

Many aspects of the foreign photographer's framework are particularly relevant to their interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles. But I believe there are two elements of this framework that most significantly aid in the creation of a new identity or meaning of the textile. First of all, how an individual perceives gender seems to greatly effect the meaning that his photographs create. This perception is particularly relevant to my photographic investigation as virtually *all* Ni-Vanuatu textiles are produced solely by women. The particular community located in a specific space and time from which the photographer emerges perceives of gender (that is the social assignment of male and female qualities) in an
extremely distinctive way. This perception of gender is carried with foreigners as they encounter a Ni-Vanuatu textile and thus frames the meaning they assign to the object itself. Secondly, I believe that the manner in which an individual perceives time and temporal relationships between communities will also influence the meaning a foreigner assigns to a Ni-Vanuatu textile.

Foreigners have often believed that as they travel to communities such as those located in Vanuatu, they are not only crossing space but also traveling backwards in time to a distant point in their own community’s history. Accordingly, objects of material culture like the textiles come to be interpreted as signifiers of a time already past in their own history. I would like to suggest through this project that these perceptions held by foreigners constitute elements of their mental framework which not only form their interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles but can in fact be seen within their photographic framing of the subject. Before I further detail the formation of these perceptions, however, I would first like to discuss how historical photography can be approached as a text of the foreigner’s mental, social and visual frameworks and where my project of reading photos of Ni-Vanuatu textiles might fit into the larger discourse surrounding these ideas.

Not until recently has historical photographic material received serious academic consideration. Historical photos have often been dismissed because the theory and aims of much current research appear to be so different from the goals of the original photographer. Photos were quickly dismissed as tainted evidence. Over the past thirty years, photographs, and both colonial and anthropological images, have begun to be valued as representative of the framework of the photographer. Today these photos are investigated as evidence of the ‘outsider’ experience. In 1978 Rochelle Kolodny presented an approach to historical photographic work, in three categories. This first of these categories is Romanticism, which
is concerned with the world of essences, and linked to ‘exotic’ or ‘artistic’ images. The second, Realism, concerns the world of facts and is associated with scientific, positivist, or empirical ideologies. Finally, Documentary Photography reveals the world of action, in an inspirational manner, where change is a central theme.

Elizabeth Edwards responds to Kolodny in a publication entitled Anthropology and Photography (1992). In the introductory essay, Edwards suggests that these categories are in fact more complex than Kolodny assumes. In the creation of an image many of these models may apply, making precise categorization impractical. Edwards continues to develop these concepts in her seminal work Raw Histories (2001). In this text she presents the approaches which will form the model on which I will base my reading of foreign photography of Ni-Vanuatu textiles. Edwards’ major contribution to photographic analysis is the suggestion that a photo may be viewed as an analogue of visual experience, rather than as a depiction of physical reality. In this manner the photo can represent culturally based orderings of the world, where the signifier and that which is signified in the structure of the photo have often been read as one and the same. In her work, Edwards proposes that ‘photographic inscription is not unmediated; the photograph is culturally circumscribed by ideas of what is significant at any given time, in any given context...hence the inscription itself becomes the first act of interpretation.’ (2001, 9) In sum, the approach taken by this influential text is to look into and through the photos, to the culture of the photographer. This process is an attempt to comprehend how people of the past patterned their visual world. This approach to photographic material proves most useful in my research, as I look into historical photos to get at the culture of foreign interpretation of textiles created by Ni-Vanuatu women.
An article by Martha Macintynre and Maureen MacKenzie, entitled ‘Focal Length as an Analogue of Cultural Distance also adds a great deal to current methodology in the study of foreign photography. They suggest that a detailed reading of an individual’s photos can tell so much about the photographer’s mindset and interpretation of his physically reality, specifically as it relates to a foreigner’s vision of ‘otherness’ or ‘anthropological’ themes. These authors reveal the photographer’s interpretation of ‘other’ communities by focusing on his manipulation of such elements as lighting, depth of field, composition, posture and expression. Even within photos which might be considered ‘candid’ the photographer is still making precise choices regarding how the image is constructed. It is this attention to the details of the photograph’s formal elements which makes this article so valuable as a model for my own analysis. (...)

In Pacific Island Art History photographs have begun to be approached as containing information on the framework of the photographer. In the text Pacific Art: Persistence, Change and Meaning (2002, 41), the entire first section is devoted to photographic analysis. Here the authors aim to ‘interrogate the past through the photographic image.’ The first article, by Philip J.C. Dark, uses photography to visualize the art of a specific Pacific community. Dark outlines his own use of photography in the study of the ethnno-aesthetics of Kilenge village, West New Britain. In this short piece, the author covers his experience as a photographer, revealing the extent to which his own training in art school influences his ethnographic photographic work. This piece begins an exploration of Dark’s own framing in this specific context, but does not offer an analysis of the photos nor does he pose a suggestion as to how his framing has interacted with his interpretation of local objects.

In the second article George A. Corbin explores the photographic work of E.T (Tom) Gilliard and his wife Margaret. Corbin presents a section on photos taken in
Kanganaman village of the Middle Sepik during the Gillards’ six week residence there in 1953-4. Throughout the essay photos are placed within historical context, which is provided by Corbin’s close reading of Gillard’s letters and journals, alongside written archival documentation and literature. The focus here is not on a reading of the photos but rather correlating the photos with written accounts. Because of this focus, the photos are not analyzed or seen as historical sources in and of themselves. Corbin is not reading the photos as an ordering or re-ordering/framing of the visual world, but rather as a record of Central Iatmul art and architecture just preceding World War II.

The final article of this photographic section is by Virginia-Lee Webb. In this work, Webb takes Pacific photographic analysis in a slightly different direction as she addresses the hand colored slides of the photographic record from a small American voyage: the Crane Pacific Expedition of 1928-29. Through an exploration of written documentation, Webb reveals that these lantern slides were taken in black and white film, later to be colored by hand after return to the United States. This article questions traditional Western concepts of individual artistic creativity by revealing the multi-authorship of the photos. This piece is an important step toward understanding the process of photographic recording. Again, however, the photos are merely placed within the context of the written text. There is no exploration of any dialogue that might exist between the images and written word.

Finally Kirk W. Huffmann presents an article in *Arts of Vanuatu* (1996) that summarizes the work of European artists, photographers and filmmakers, who have been active in Vanuatu. This piece represents the most comprehensive record to date. The aim of Huffmann’s work is not, however, an analysis of the material, but an index of visual documentation. Therefore he does not address the issue of contextualization or framing.
These valuable articles point towards the significance of developing an awareness of the context of the author or photographer, but stop short of looking into the structure of the photos as historical documentation of the photographer's view of the physical/material world. It is therefore my aim to explore foreign photography as it represents the foreigners' interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles. My endeavor will diverge from these recent research projects, while hopefully remaining true to Edwards' model of reading photos as a means of approaching the mental framework of the photographer. I think there are two major variations which will be found in the structure of my research. First and foremost, I will attempt an area or subject-based approach. As previously stated, my primary interest is focused on Ni-Vanuatu clothing and textiles. As such, I will closely examine and visually analyze a variety of photos taken by a number of different photographers. Although this choice might have been somewhat risky considering the sheer number of photos in existence on this one small subject, I believe that even a small sampling of these photos might give some indication as to how interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles were built on and against one another by foreign eyes.

Edward Said has been the foremost advocate of area-based studies, as he revealed the great impact of placing various images of foreign lands side by side. Naturally he is dealing with written as opposed to photographic text, but the result is similar, and I would like to suggest, even more direct as foreign viewers add these images to their visual memory relating to the nation of Vanuatu. It might even be possible that these images and more importantly these interpretations become part of Ni-Vanuatu artistic identities. It is because of this implication that I did decide not to focus on one photographer's encounters with textiles; rather I focus on many different interpretations so they may be compared and
contrasted in order to reveal how various perceptions of Ni-Vanuatu textiles might interact with one another.

Secondly, I also chose to define the boundaries of my project by focusing on specific individuals' photography. I made this decision for many reasons, one of which being that too often colonial discourse is simply discussed as a mere justification for colonization. As was suggested by Thomas in ‘Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth Century Evangelical Propaganda’ (1992), colonial discourse is actually an extremely diverse genre, with as many alternative and specific aims as there are participants in the dialogue. The agendas of the photographers will prove to be most important in their interpretations of, or their blindness to, the textiles productions of Ni-Vanuatu women. As a person travels away from the comfort of their own community, they do so with very particular goals or expectations in mind. I think we will see throughout the course of this work that these expectations largely construct how an object is seen or even not seen.

I also wanted to focus on specific individuals as opposed to generalized ‘types’ of colonial discourse, such as Exploration, Anthropology, or Travel Writing, as it allowed me to delve into the specific background of the photographer. This background could therefore include personal information, as all aspects of a person's previous experiences do aid in the construction of his visual framework, through which he interprets all new physical material he encounters. It would have been most interesting for me to attempt to re-construct and become familiar with the photographers' pre-formed visual worlds or frameworks through investigations of wider photos produced in their own communities. We would therefore be accessing their visual worlds through a visual means. Although I considered this approach, in the end it proved to be so entangled, as all of these 'background' photos were also authored by particular individuals with particular aims, that this approach would have taken
away from my larger focus on the build-up of foreigners' interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles. For these reason most of this background information will come from written records, however, following the work of Edwards, my starting point will always be the photos themselves.

Now that I have briefly described the framework with which I approached these photos, I would like to continue to discuss the two themes of foreign perceptions of gender and time. Again these are themes which I believe will greatly inform the photographer's interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles and thus space his photographic framing of the objects.

There has been a great deal written on photographic representations of Pacific women. Most of these studies, however, have focused on the exotification of women's bodies, not interpretations of women's productions. For example in the writing of Tamasailau M. Su'alii, discussion is focused on gaze, gender, the exotic, sexuality or erotic, and co-modification as it links to power imbalances as seen in the continuity of colonial constructions. (1999, 93) She addresses how these links permeate the way in which the bodies of Pacific Island women are seen as opposing 'types.' Although, here I use the photos as a means to investigate foreign frameworks, Su'alii only looks at the placement of the body as 'in context' or 'out of context' and not at subtleties of the photographic structure. In the end, this analysis proves slightly superficial. My project will differ significantly from this form of study. To begin with I will visually analyze the very form of the photos and secondly I will focus my attention on women's productions. I hope that this focus on the creations of Ni-Vanuatu women will provide a shift in analytical aims towards more fully exploring the subject of women's contributions to their community and the manner in which these contributions are also viewed as gendered. I feel that an attention to the
imaging of female *creative productions*, not representations of the Ni-Vanuatu female *body*, will be beneficial to the aim of valuing women's contributions and not focusing on women merely as the passive objects of the 'colonial gaze.'

The most recent and relevant work on the topic of perceptions of Ni-Vanuatu women's productions is an article entitled 'European Perceptions of the Art of Vanuatu,' by Margerate Jolly, scholar of gender relations and Pacific colonial history. The piece has been published in *Arts of Vanuatu* (1996). Jolly presents a range of historical responses to objects and art from Vanuatu in order to discuss the gender of the creator as it becomes transferred to the object of creation. Thus the object may be seen as masculine or feminine. Within colonial perceptions this indigenous distinction between men's and women's creations, has been translated to a distinction between that which is *craft* (female) and that which is *Art* (male). Jolly's work considers interpretations of visual art from Vanuatu by 18th to 20th century Europeans, significantly stating that 'the colonial interest of these viewers structured their response to the art of Vanuatu.' (1996, 267)

Jolly continues in the body of her text to outline responses to objects and art in Vanuatu. While analyzing the responses of Georg Forster, missionary John Paton and anthropologists Speiser and Layard, Jolly directs her attention to written remarks on women's creations in comparison with comments on men's work. This article highlights the effects of the foreigner's framework on the meaning assigned to female visual creations. Throughout the piece there is a particular emphasis on written documentation of assigned meaning, with photos used to illustrate the author's analysis of the linguistic texts. In this project I will be starting with an examination of the photographic work, as I believe that it more directly expresses the visual experience and interpretation of the photographer, as it
fabian. (1983) in this text fabian discusses how it is that communities labeled as 'outside' western cultures, have been viewed as not only distant in geographical space but have also been seen as distant in time. fabian demonstrates that these communities constructed by the 'western' worlds as 'other' have been perceived as representing the historical past in relation to the home community. for example, even prior to the development of anthropology as an academic discipline, 'non-western' communities had been viewed as located at a point in time before christian 'salvation' or at a point before full evolution. these models are often envisioned as a straight line from the past to the present, all communities plotted in terms of their distance from the present. fabian walks us through the history of anthropology drawing out how time was perceived and used and each stage of this history.

thomas, in his work 'colonial conversions: difference, hierarchy and history in early twentieth century evangelical propaganda' (1992), departs from fabian's models of time, by suggests that perceptions of time are not as easily classified. he illustrates that different perceptions of time are in fact used to further the varied interests of particular types of foreigners that are usually labeled under the broad category of 'colonial discourse' (1992). therefore the manner in which time and its relationship to geographical space is...
perceived as not only dependent on the foreigner's location in Western history, but also on their particular aims in travel. Thomas discusses textual and visual propaganda of the Methodist mission in the Western Solomon Islands. Here, he reveals that Fabian's 'pre-modern' model of time and space, where the 'other' has not yet reached salvation, in fact persists into modern time through the writing and photography of evangelical missionaries. This work is significant as Thomas displays how photographic material may be read in order to access the photographer's perceptions of time.

In this project, I wish to build on these concepts and examine what role the conceptualization of time and space might play in foreign interpretation or responses to objects from Vanuatu. Because 'artifacts' as 'historical achievements' were often used as signs of temporal location, it is my opinion that these models and ways of thinking about time and space have fundamentally effected the foreign assigning of meaning to Ni-Vanuatu objects, art and women's textiles in particular.

At this point, I would like to site those individuals whose work I think will be most useful to include in this analysis. When Pacific explorers interacted with the material culture of Ni-Vanuatu, the meanings of these objects had to be constructed in such a way as to fit with their pre-existing frameworks. As this comparison will take span many periods, I will also provide information on the period out of which each photographer worked. To make this background information more comprehensive and to avoid redundancies I will move chronologically through the imaging, starting with William Hodges, who was Captain James Cook's artist on his second Pacific voyage. Hodges traveled to the islands that are now Vanuatu. Although photography had not yet been invented, a visual record was nonetheless created, and I would like to review Hodges' drawings in Chapter 1 in order to understand the relationship between his framework and his artistic representation of textiles. I believe
the inclusion of drawings is, in this case, necessary as they represent the first foreign interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles.

Missionaries in Vanuatu also had intense interactions with the textiles of locale women and categorized these objects within their own Christian frames. In Chapter 2 the photos of Rev. James Hay Lawrie will be discussed to reflect these perspectives. I would like to explore his concepts of time and space, as they affect his readings of the textiles he encountered and in turn affect the manner in which he physically frames the objects he photographs.

Anthropologists, naturally, have a history of physically encountering the textiles and re-presenting the meanings they saw within these objects. Revealed through these meanings are the scientific aims of their research. In Chapter 3, I will discuss anthropologist Felix Speiser’s production of many photos of material culture that are still used today. I plan to explore these photos, in relation to Speiser’s assumptions of gender, time and of the role of textiles in culture.

Early tourists or ‘adventurers,’ as they came to be known, also saw meaning within these textiles. Their meanings are often related to their own conceptions of the ‘exotic’. Two such early tourists in Vanuatu, were Osa and Martin Johnson, who kept journals and took photos which I will investigate in Chapter 4. Through this investigation I will gather themes that may have framed their interpretations.

Additionally, travel writers also create and represent meanings of the art of the areas they are visiting. These meanings can be seen as revealing the intended aims of the authors to increase tourism to these islands. Again, to approach these meanings I will attempt a recreation of their conceptual frames. From this category of writing, I will look at the work
of Hermann and Bonnemaison in Chapter 5, as their photos are often referred to today in the Western education system.

Most recently, feminist anthropologists have attempted to reconstruct the original meaning of Ni-Vanuatu textiles. Through their presentation of this meaning, one can see their theoretical framework. I feel that the most recent anthropologist working in Vanuatu, Lissant Bolton, has also produced some of the most captivating photographs. I am interested in looking at various aspects of her work in Chapter 6, in order to understand her framings of the objects through her photography.

In sum, for this project I propose to read the visual works of Hodges and subsequent foreign photography taken of textiles from Vanuatu. By closely examining the structure of specific photos as well as placing the photos within the context of written history, I wish to ask, how are textiles from Vanuatu literally and intellectually framed? How does the process of interpretation operate through a visual means? Clearly, as illustrated so beautifully by Margerate Jolly (1996) through an examination of written material, concepts of gender have greatly influenced the framing of textiles. But in this project I would also like to tease out concepts of time and how these notions might affect interpretation of female arts in Vanuatu, through a use of both written text and visual material. How do these temporal perceptions frame the textiles within the context of the photo?

In order to express this exploration in my own written form I had to determine how my own voice could be heard, as like all other researchers here discussed, I bring to the texts my own personal, social, and visual frameworks, as well as my own agendas. My own subjectivity is always at play within my work. Therefore, I have attempted to remind the reader of my own subjective nature at particular points throughout this text, without pulling the focus away from my aims of exploration. These strategically placed expressions of my
own interpretative nature are found in this introduction, as I hope I have clearly laid out my own background and aims, in the concluding notes at the end of each chapter, and in the final chapter.

Although this project has diverged greatly from my initial interest in clothing as it shapes personal experiences through the physical representation of social and political worlds, I believe that this photographic study will bring me closer to an engagement with textiles. In essence, I am looking at the process of the interpretation of Ni-Vanuatu textiles—a process in which I also participate. I hope that through this discussion I will gain a better understanding of the visual nature of this process. In the long run, however, I expect that this understanding of the visual process will point to the need of acknowledging the importance of alternative body senses in the assignment of meaning to textiles. To be truly aware of the experiences of Ni-Vanuatu textiles, one needs not only a visual investigation, but also an exploration of the full range of the interaction, including the feel of the textiles, their weight, temperature, sounds and smells.
Chapter One
Beginnings of Interpretation and Representation;
The Rendering of William Hodges
Introduction - The Voyage

The first foreign images to attempt to represent interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles were rendered in 1774 by William Hodges, the artist on Captain James Cook’s second voyage of exploration. Cook’s Resolution and Adventurer were the first European ships to travel among the island group that is now known as Vanuatu. One of this voyage’s principle aims was to record details of foreign lands and peoples in written and visual forms to be circulated within the European world. The descriptions of material culture from Vanuatu are recorded in some capacity in the voyage’s written accounts, but primarily it is Cook’s collections that represent the explorers’ interactions with objects of Vanuatu communities. There is also a lack of material culture presented in Hodges’ drawings, and the textiles that are imaged are not the focus of his renderings; rather they are meant to contextualize the people and events for the scientific record. In this chapter I will examine those few examples of Hodges’ work where textiles are portrayed in order to investigate how these fabrics might have been seen by the European crew members. These drawings represent the impressions of one crew member as he attempts to locate these seemingly unusual forms of dress within his own pre-existing visual frameworks.

It is well known that William Hodges was not the first choice of artists to produce the visual record. The first official artist on the ship Resolution was John Zaffany, who had been hired by the wealthy botanist meant to travel with Cook, Joseph Banks. Due to Banks’ luxurious additions to the ship which made her top heavy in May of 1772 a month before departure, Cook refused to sail with Banks and his crew, including Zaffany. These dramatics forced a quick replacement of the ship’s artist. It is quite fascinating that these images would have been significantly different if Zaffany had been able to sail, as unlike Hodges, he was a specialist in royal portraits, having studied under Masucci. Masucci was an Italian painter
and draughtsman, made famous in the 1730s for his portraiture inspired by the classical compositions and style of Raphael. Under his tutelage Zaffany quickly came to be regarded as the master of subject drawings favored in the Neo-Classical style (Joppien 1985, 3).

Although Hodges had very little time to prepare for the tasks that would be put to him on voyage, it was reported by Cook that his abilities were quickly adapted to the scientific demands of navigation and exploration (Stuebe 1979, 17). And indeed it can be seen that his first images showed little attention to the traditions of classical landscape drawings in which he had been trained.

The islands of Vanuatu were reached on July 22, 1774, a full two years after leaving London. These early explorers stayed within the island group until August 23rd, making landings on Malekula (then known as Mallicolo), Eromanga, and Tana, then circling Efate (then known as Sandwich Island) (Stuebe 1979, 101). Visiting these islands represented the first time that Cook and crew had experienced the cultures which would later become known as ‘Melanesian’. Reactions to these communities within the written record seem somewhat varied and often contradict the interpretations seen in Hodges’ images. The Europeans had become accustomed to interacting with peoples speaking Polynesian languages, who shared many aspects of their cultures and appearances such as a political system based on a monarchy, aspects of material culture (e.g. tapa) light skin and the presence of tattoos. Encountering new and vastly diverse communities such as those found in Vanuatu was an unexpected experience. George Forster noted that the people had ‘monkey faces and woolly hair’ which suggested a connection between these people and the people of Africa who had been described in a similar manner (Thomas 2003, 238-9). Cook himself described Ni-Vanuatu peoples as ‘ugly or ape-like’ (Joppien 1985, 92). Clearly these written descriptions were shaped by the European concepts regarding the overall beauty of
lightness, and overall negative associations with darkness. The visual record created by Hodges, however, shows all individuals of Vanuatu to have a distinctly dignified air.

Although Hodges’ representations of dignity could be primarily related to his use of a Neo-Classical style, this seems unlikely as inhabitants of other island groups are in some cases depicted as lacking this ‘refined’ nature and Hodges himself is reported to have thought of heavy classism as old fashioned (Joppien 1985, 92). It is therefore more probable that he was depicting particular scenes in a classical manner in order to capture a sense of the specific circumstances and his own impressions of the experience. These impressions and their representation can be seen to be based on Hodges own pre-formed framework, which developed from his past personal, social and visual history.

**Background of the Artist**

Although Hodges’ portraits of the people and material culture of the Pacific Islands have become recognized as the most accurate of his renderings, he was originally hired to travel with Cook due primarily to his achievements in classical landscape drawing. It is within this category of painting that Hodges truly excelled. It was in fact his representations of foreign landscapes that initially drew the attention of the Admiralty Board. His training in this field began very early in his life, and remained the focus of this professional career.

Hodges was born in London in 1744 as the son of a blacksmith who worked in the prestigious St. James Market. This upbringing classified Hodges as part of a new upwardly mobile class of tradesmen. As such he was able to be sent for artistic training at Mr. Shipley’s school. After showing some talent in this arena Hodges, at the age of 14, began an apprenticeship under the well known landscape painter Richard Wilson that would last for seven years. This experience with Wilson occurred just after Wilson had returned from Italy, where he had become a part of the Neo-Classical movement. This style rejected the
decadence of the French Rococo style and the extravagant nature of the Italian Baroque and turned toward the ‘noble simplicity and quiet grandeur’ found in the art of Italy’s classical past (Winckelmann 1755 as quoted in Preziosi 1998, 31). Wilson incorporated elegant styles of well-balanced compositions and ideally beautiful forms to produce English landscapes in a classical style. This style met with great success as the classical forms appealed to educated men of the upper class who had been schooled in classical works and had recently been exposed to newly discovered classical works. Hodges himself became so apt at following his mentor’s teachings on the art of Neo-classical landscape drawing that many of his works often passed as Wilson’s (Stuebe 1979, 5-7).

Hodges continued to develop as an artist after his education under Wilson and developed his own distinctive style, although traces of the classical landscape traditions always remained in his works. He soon began to incorporate some aspects of Canaletto’s compositions, such as the inclusion of architectural subjects and an emphasis on diagonal elements within the design (Ibid, 9 and 11). Most significantly, Hodges witnessed the extreme popularity of the American artist Benjamin West’s portrayal of foreign lands. West began to show his works in London in 1763, and a few years later he became a founding member of the Royal Academy of Arts. Hodges was certainly familiar with his works. West’s art comprised a mixture of the monumental composition of history paintings, paired with elements of Christian iconography and most significantly strict adherence to an accurate depiction of portraits, costume and scenery. Hodges adopted and worked within this combination of styles as he attempted to represent his own interpretations of the material culture and specifically of the clothing of Vanuatu. As will be discussed, it is Hodges’ delicate balance between these very elements that will reveal his impression of Ni-Vanuatu textiles and their relationship to temporal location.
Hodges was hired to replace Zaffany at the request of Lord Palmerston, member of the Admiralty board. Palmerston was impressed with what he perceived as Hodges’ ability to represent exotic scenery which was made apparent in his exhibited works of four views of Switzerland and Germany. As Palmerston had recently traveled to these very locales, he was able to attest to the accuracy of the paintings’ depictions (Ibid, 16). Hodges accepted the invitation to sail and thus became the first European man to represent his impressions of Ni-Vanuatu culture and material culture.

After the Cook voyage and a subsequent trip to India, Hodges suffered the censorship of the Duke of York over a series of landscape paintings depicting Turkish troops in the English countryside. From then on Hodges was regarded as democratic-minded and an enemy of the royalty. After a failed attempt to run a banking firm, Hodges died in March 1797, a death which was later rumored to be suicide (Ibid, 75-78 and 80).

**The Visual Record**

We now have access to 12 images produced by Hodges during the month spent in the islands of Vanuatu. Of these 12, 3 depict Cook’s landings on the islands, 6 represent portraits of individuals, 2 are views of the coast of specific islands and 1 represents an uncommon view of an interior village setting. It is noteworthy here that Hodges did not choose to represent any aspects of material culture aside from providing the context for interactions or portraits. Although there is some detailing of objects within Cook’s and Forster’s written accounts, for the most part they limited their visual record of material culture to what they could collect through trade. It is possible, however, to analyze these explorers’ impressions and interpretations of the Ni-Vanuatu physical objects through their visual representations which provide the context and details of Hodge’s island scenes and portraits. Even though the textiles were not the focus of these depictions, it is clear that an
artist cannot represent aspects of material culture without first interpreting their meaning, or at least seeing them through his own particular lens.

The accuracy of Hodges' depictions of material culture has been highly debated, a dispute which began immediately after the explorers returned to London. The three landing scenes, *The Landing at Malicolo*, *The Landing at Erromanga*, and *The Landing at Tana* were more severely criticized by accompanying voyagers than were the portraits and the coastal views. These criticisms came from Hodges' attention to the general impressions of the events over a detailed visual description. The detailed landscape of the coast lines in these three images, however, does speak to the navigational and charting interests of the voyage. *The Landing at Malicolo* did receive some praise from George Forster due to the careful depiction of the dress of the islanders ([See figure 1](#)). Hodges' details here are representative of the fact that for the first time he was present in Cook's landing ship (Stuebe 1979, 112) and therefore was able to create meticulous sketches of the islanders' material culture. In contrast *The Landing at Erromanga* was one of Hodges' most heavily attacked works both by George Forster who commented 'Mr. Hodges has invented a drawing', and in the Royal Academy for the similarity between islanders' and Europeans' complexions and the frieze-like composition ([See figure 2](#)). Again the accuracy of the painting can be traced to the circumstances under which it was created, as the European men were violently confronted by the islanders upon arrival, giving little time for a close inspection of the clothing of the natives. The composition itself was not of Hodges' creation but was based on a model provided by Cipriani, who was more talented in the area of figure composition ([See figure 3](#)). Yet another dramatic moment is depicted by Hodges in *The Landing at Tana*, as violent tensions are alleviated by an elderly island man known as Paowang (Ibid 158-160). As the European
crew was able to spend two weeks visiting the island, there was plenty of time for careful study of the men. Later portrait sketches were used as models in the landing scene.

Portraits created by Hodges throughout the voyage were thought to be the most accurate and of most scientific value as they clearly describe the people with whom the travelers interacted without the altering effects of dramatic events. In all portraits Hodges did have time to sit and carefully study the bodies and clothing of the islanders without the distractions of navigating the politics of interactions between two distinct communities. The six portraits from Vanuatu were no exception, as George Forster notes that the Vanuatu inhabitants were ‘easily persuaded to sit for their portraits and seemed to have an idea of representation’ (G. Forster 1777, 210). Although Foster was also exercising his own subjectivity in his interpretations of events such as this, we can at least assume from his statement that the islanders had no major objections to the portrait drawing.

Through this brief survey of Hodges’ work in Vanuatu, it seems as though the accuracy of the depictions of textiles and dress were merely dependent on the time available to study the material culture of the islands. Yet the style and framing of this clothing is in fact based on much of Hodges’ background and socialization in the European world of gendered perspectives and Enlightenment concepts of time.

**Gender and Dress**

Individual and community understandings of gender and gendered roles within society greatly effected the interpretation of Ni-Vanuatu material culture and its depiction in the work of William Hodges. Late 18th century European concepts of gender as they were imposed upon the islanders’ diverse lifestyles are apparent both in the written and visual record of Cook’s voyage. These gendered concepts can be seen in the representations of women contextualized by their dress, as well as in a comparison of the portrayal of men’s
dress to the depictions of women’s dress. In these rendering of islanders’ dress we can find a meaning of the textiles created by the European men where dress is used symbolically to mark the assumed lower status of women.

Representations of Ni-Vanuatu women in which Hodges must always include a depiction of their dress, embodies a European concept of working women as symbols of a depraved community. The dress of these women therefore becomes a marker of their laboring status. A unique village scene entitled Views of Tana represents the first women of the Vanuatu islands to be depicted in a European work of art (See figure 4). Our understanding of these images must be based purely on the resulting engraving as the original sketches of Hodges have long disappeared. Although this image is a rare scene of village life, the primary focus is not on the group of individuals; rather the people are placed within a beautifully detailed landscape of the type for which Hodges was famous. It was, however, noted by Cook that Hodges did at this same time make detailed sketches of the individuals present in order to later produce finished portraits (Stuebe 1979, 161). The scene reveals Hodges’ specialization in classical landscapes. The islanders and the dress are framed by a well balanced composition of landscape. In fact the general shape and lighting of the foliage seems to be echoed in the placement of the figures, particularly the women. It can be seen that a large triangle is formed by the smaller, lit palm in the foreground, just left of the center of the frame, and the larger, lit palm in the mid-ground on the left, with the setting sun in the background forming the third point of light. A similar smaller triangle is formed by the two lit women in the front, left of the figure grouping, and the standing lit women in the mid-ground of the grouping, with the lit face of the final women in the back forming the point in this triangle. In this echoing, it is possible that Hodges intended to portray a connection between Ni-Vanuatu women and nature.
In this image the depiction of the ornaments and dress appear accurate although they are downplayed in favor of an overall, general impression of village life, a trend that becomes apparent in Hodges' work. The village is seen as peaceful and calm. If one looks more closely at the representation of the villagers it is possible to see an interpretation of the islanders' gendered positions, in which textiles and clothing plays a direct role.

A man in partial profile is seated at the front and center of the grouping. He has a relaxed stance as he rests his body weight on a spear and casually crosses his legs. Another man crouches at his side leaning his body weight on his right arm placed behind him as he glances to his left. Neither of the men is supporting his own weight thereby creating an impression of leisure. The 4 women of the group are shown behind the men in postures which could be interpreted as submissive or supportive roles. Although their faces are somewhat tranquil, the positions of their bodies do suggest more activity then the men's. Most of the women are engaged in caring for children and the men are present to protect the family group. It seems clear, however, that this concept of protection is merely a guise, as the overall impression is one of peace; no real threat can be seen and the men do not appear alert to any perceived dangers. The European interpretation of the positions of Ni-Vanuatu women as the laborers of the island communities is also made evident in the written record of the voyage. Cook states: 'I have seen a woman carrying a large bundle on her back or a child on her back and a fellow strutting before her with nothing but a club, or spear or some such thing in his hand' (Beaglehole 1961, 504). This account is in line with Hodges' interpretation and seems to be the general opinion of the European crew. For the written account, however, one does get more of a impression that this gendered aspect of village life is frowned upon by the European men, who are unaccustomed to seeing all classes of women engaged in manual labor. The clothing in this image is used to support these views.
of island gender roles. While the men are seemingly relaxed in their barely visible dress, the women’s clothing seems more visible often including a covering on the head. One of the women, later represented in a portrait, and seen here as the second women from the right, uses a fold of her dress to create a basket on her back in which she holds a child. The woman standing to the left of the man uses part of her garment to wrap a child in her arms. The multi-fiber skirts seen on the three seated women seem to bundle at their hips; Hodges does not pay attention to any decorative detail. J.R Forster notes the use of the textiles on the islands of Vanuatu as he states ‘The women carry their young Children on their backs in a kind of bag made of a piece of cloth’ (Joppien 1985, 231). These forms of seemingly functional textiles embody the European perspective of the women’s positions as the laborers of the community.

This European male perception of Vanuatu gender relations can also be seen through a comparison of the depiction of men’s ornamentation with women’s decorative dressing elements. All the early explorers seem to have noted the elaborate decoration of the men’s bodies which they compared to women’s dress to find the men’s more beautifully adorned. G. Forster goes on to state that ‘wherever that is the case, the sex is commonly oppressed, despised and in a deplorable situation’ (Forster 1777, 462). Here, again we see that aspects of dress are interpreted and thereby depicted by the Europeans as a symbol of women’s lower status within the island communities.

This interpretation is clear as Hodges attempts to embellish aspects of the men’s body decoration while simplifying the women’s. In the series of portraits entitled Man of the Island of Mallicolo we can see the man’s ornaments transformed to better suit the crew’s impression of the man’s elaborate decoration. In the earliest image probably drawn at the time of meeting, the man is depicted with a simple cord of fiber around his neck (See figure
5). Another drawing which could have been the first image made for the engraver is very similar with just a simple cord. The subsequent drawing is a preliminary study for a third version, which includes a bow that could have been among Cook’s collections (See figure 6). Other additions consist of an elaborate armlet, nose ornaments, and also a bracelet. All of these additions were included and clearly delineated in the first version of the engraving for publication by J. Caldwall (See figure 7). Surprisingly, in the final version of the engraving that did make it to publication all but the nose ornaments were replaced by a Roman style toga thrown over the man’s right shoulder (See figure 8). This alternation, however, was made by Caldwall and objected to by G. Forster, who commented that ‘a defect in the drawing has made it necessary to infringe the costume and to throw a drapery over the shoulder, though these people have no kind of clothing’ (Joppien 1985, 92). From the previous studies, however, there does not seem to be any such defect, which might suggest that the replacement of the originally imaged dress was a stylistic preference of the engraver. Whatever the reason for the change, the representation of the toga should not be taken as the crew’s interpretation of the man’s appearance or of Hodges’ representation of this interpretation. It is clear that Hodges wished to display the fine ornamentation generally worn by Ni-Vanuatu men, even though the particular man who had acted as a model did not possess any of these decorations. It may also be seen in Man of Tana that Hodges wished to display an elegant rendering of the man’s facial decoration as the diagonal stripe is depicted as precise, graceful facial adornment (See figure 9). The written account of this face paint, however, is negative, as the facial paint ‘is uniformly deplored as yielding a filthy or greasy appearance’ (Jolly 1996, 269).

If we are to compare this rendering of body decoration to that of Woman of the Island of Tana we can see that more attention is paid to the functional nature of women’s,
exaggerating the impression of the European men that men are of higher status then women in the island communities (See figure 10). It was noted in the written records that women of Tana ‘have all the same ornaments as men, Nose-Stone, earrings, Shells on the breast and bracelets… there heads covered with a kind of cap made of a Plantain leaf or a mat-basket’ (J.R Forster 1982, 626). Though these decorations seem elaborate in written descriptions, Hodges’ depiction of the women seems to once again only calling attention to the functionality of the dress. The woman’s clothing seems to be rendered merely to display the functionality of the garment in carrying children. It may also be significant that this image represents the only inclusion of a child in any of Hodges’ portraits. It is significant that this inclusion appears solely in the depiction of a Ni-Vanuatu woman, as these women are most commented on in the written records as oppressed members of the island communities.

In sum, the images of Ni-Vanuatu dress and textiles by Hodges represent the interpretation of late 18th century European men. Hodges’ and the engraver’s interpretations set up the Ni-Vanuatu women as laboring and therefore exploited members of society. As the textiles are depicted and framed within this context of assumed subjugation, they become makers of women’s labor and oppression.

**Dress as Temporal Markers**

Concepts of the nature of time also influence the European explorers’ interpretations and depictions of textiles from Vanuatu. The temporal concept that these men work within are based in the Enlightenment movement (Jolly 1996, 268). These concepts represent a break with Judeo-Christian understandings of time which consisted of a view of time as a sequence of meaningful events within a specific European community (Fabian 1983, 2). This view aided in the creation of a narrative of salvation which, within Enlightenment communities, was replaced with the ‘myth-history of reason’ (Ibid, 6) which represents the
concept of accumulating ‘scientific’ knowledge over time. In the context of these ideas, concepts of scientific travel or the quest for knowledge outside of the immediate European communities became intertwined with the notion of exploring time. In fact just after the publication of the written and visual accounts of Cook’s voyages, the renowned academic Degerando stated ‘The philosophical traveler, sailing to the ends of the earth, is in fact traveling in time; he is exploring the past; every step he makes is the passage of an age’ (Degerando 1800 as quoted in Fabian 1983, 7). It was not, however, until the development of social evolutionary thought that the idea of investigating ‘the past’ through foreign exploration was directly expressed. Therefore in the written account of Cook’s travels exploring ‘the past’ remains implied in the movement through space. These ideas of travel with the aim of exposing past histories contradict the notion of exploration voyage purely based on the desire for knowledge of other places and peoples. Instead the goal seems to be to ‘complete the history of man’ (Fabian 1983, 8). Once again the written record of the voyage only directly expresses the concept of ‘scientific’ discovery without the explicit mention of history. Yet it becomes clear that these concepts of history and time operate in the traveler's interpretation of material culture, through the depictions by Hodges. The reading of the images, however, is not without complications as there is commonly an association made between thinking of communities as ‘less developed’ or ‘lesser then’ the exploring community if they are seen as representing times past. It must be remembered, however, that in the context of the European artistic and educated communities of the late 18th century the glorious past of the ancient Greece is romanticized and idealized. As the writings of Winckelmann reveal, this romanticization is particularly true in the recent communal visual memory which had enjoyed the discovery of numerous classical archeological finds.
As discussed above, the textiles seen in such works as *Views of Tana* and *Woman of Tana* were depicted in a manner that marked Ni-Vanuatu women as having a lower community status as laborers. Working women were set up in the mind of the European male explorer as a symbol of a community that has not yet developed to a point along an imagined line of progression of knowledge to allow women the leisure to which upper-class educated men of Europe were accustomed to observing in the women of their communities (Jolly 1996, 268). In Hodges’ images textiles became a symbol of the labored nature of Ni-Vanuatu women’s lives, thereby becoming markers of a past ‘stage’ of history where there was a lack of knowledge that would allow women not to perform manual labor.

Secondly, the idea of time or history is demonstrated in Hodges’ choice of Neo-Classical traditions for transcribing images of Vanuatu as he chooses to make use of the Neo-Classical traditions. Although references to classical styles were popular within the European community, Hodges was clearly capable of leaning more towards a scientific/realistic/ or ‘objective’ portrayal as seen in his navigational rendering such as *Sandwich Island* and in his detailed and presumably accurate depiction of the islanders’ dress. In fact, as previously stated, Hodges did not appreciate full blown neo-classicism and thought it old fashioned (Joppien 1985, 92). Yet many of his landing scenes were criticized primarily by the Forsters for inaccuracies that resulted from Hodges neo-classical style. In particular *The Landing at Erromanga* was attacked for using classical styles to depict the violent interaction that took place (See figure 2). Hodges seems to have chosen to use these styles, as he was accustomed to seeing dramatic events portrayed in this classical manner. It is true that the composition and forms of this image were based on a work depicting a classical scene by Cipriani, who donated the image upon Hodges’ return as he was preparing the final drawings for the engraver. Although no direct or detailed records of Cipriani’s production of this
sketch are available, it may be assumed that it was given to Hodges to use in his own work, as his master had much more experience with figure composition. (See figure 3). In fact, it seems that Hodges simply replaced Cipriani’s Greek athletes with idealized depictions of the ‘noble savage.’ In defense of Hodges' images, his friend William Wale pointed to George Forster’s own classical descriptions of the islanders and commented that the image is meant to represent the general impression of events (Stuebe 1979, 40). Indeed, even Cook himself compared these men to ‘Homeric spear-throwers’ (Joppien 1985, 95). It may be that the general impression of the violent event caused the crew in their written words and Hodges in his visual depiction of classical forms and historical composition to recall classical images. This recalling may have taken place because the European men were most familiar with the expression of violent dramatics within classical contexts, such as history paintings and written works.

Within this context of visual recalling a historical ‘stage’ of Europe, island men’s clothing were also interpreted and represented. In Hodges’ image entitled The Landing at Mallicolo we may see depictions of the island men’s nambas or penis covering where the penis is wrapped and strapped with a tight belt to the abdomen (See figure 1). As the figure of Cook hands his musket to an officer and gestures to the shore, his posture is mirrored in the position of the island man who holds a branch above his head while opening his right arm to the ground. These two men seem to encourage a comparison between the detailed dress of Cook and the specific dress of the islander. G. Forster comments on the islanders’ nambas; ‘At Mallicolo they have not yet attained that degree of opulence which could have suggested the invention of garments’ (G. Forster 1968, 468). Through the phase ‘not yet’ it appears clear that the dress is regarded as a ‘primitive stage’ or a past phase of history which requires a passage of time to reach the stage that the Europeans occupy in the present where
there is enough wealth and knowledge to produce those forms of dress seen on the explorers.

A visual remembering of images of the past does seem present in the interpretations of the Ni-Vanuatu material culture and dress, which is made apparent in Hodges' visual record. As these explorers encountered new individuals and new physical experiences, they had to place them within their previously established visual knowledge of the world. In other words, the physical worlds of the Ni-Vanuatu communities had been reordered within the explorers' pre-existing framework. The Enlightenment's narrative of the progressive accumulation of rational knowledge through the passage of time was transformed into a passage though space. This concept, in combination with the romanticized aesthetic memory of classical works, seemingly caused Ni-Vanuatu textiles to be neatly categorized as objects representing a past way of life. As noted by Jolly the visual record of Cook's voyage can be considered crucial to the emergence of later evolutionary theories of human communities.

Conclusions

I find these works by Hodges to be so intriguing as they represent the first 'outsider' interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu material culture; an impression constructed under the gaze of foreign men. Of course these representations do differ in many ways from the rest of the foreign depictions that I will continue to discuss as they are drawings and paintings as opposed to photographs. To me the fact that the first representations are in every way the complete creation of Hodges makes them all the more fascinating, as they most directly reveal his own framing of the Ni-Vanuatu material culture. In this case it seems clear that the textiles are interpreted as both markers of the low status of island women, through the depiction of female textiles' functionality and as representative of a romantic historical past.
Although these interpretations and subsequent representations are the product of Hodges’ own framework, we will see that they form the foundational image upon which other foreigners will build.

1 See such works as *Isle of Mayo distant 2 miles and the Hill B West* which was one of the first completed by Hodge in August 1772. It represents a seemingly objective view of the coast and land formation of the island, remaining true to the navigational aims of the rendering.

2 See such works as *Man in Christmas Sound, Tierra Del Fuego*, as a man is clearly depicted as ‘uncivilized’ through the torn nature of his dress and messiness of his hair.
Figure 1: The Landing at Mallicolo, Hodges

Figure 2: The Landing at Erromanga, Hodges
Figure 3: Composition Drawing, Cipriani

Figure 4: View in the Island and Tanna, Hodges, Engraved by Woollett
Figure 5: Man of the Island of Mallicolo, Hodges

Figure 6: Man of the Island of Mallicolo, Hodges
Figure 7: *Man of the Island of Mallicolo*, Hodges Engraved by J. Caldwell

Figure 8: *Man of the Island of Mallicolo*, Hodges Engraved by J. Caldwell
Figure 9: Man of Tana, Hodges

Figure 10: Woman of the Island of Tana, Hodges
Chapter Two
Clothing and Conversion to Christianity;
The Photography of James Hay Lawrie
Introduction - Missionary Work

Missionary interactions with Ni-Vanuatu material culture in general and with clothing in particular have been the focus of much recent research, as a majority of missionary workers throughout colonial experiences have seen a change in dress as the greatest signifier of a change in spirit. The adoption of Western styles of clothing by various communities has marked their conversion to Christianity in the minds of the missionaries. During this process many missionaries also seem to construct a binary system where the indigenous clothing is polarized in a separate category from the introduced clothing and as such comes to represent 'heathenism' or more specifically a stage of heathenism.

Early missionary work in Vanuatu seems to be theoretically interwoven with interpretations of textiles/dress. Missionaries in fact had such strong opinions of the indigenous forms of clothing, or lack thereof, that they literally flooded the islands with Western styles of dress. Although Cook had left behind some loom-woven cloth, it was not until the 1820s that Western fabrics became available even on a small scale through the development of the sandalwood trade (Lawson 1994, 58). The sale of these fabrics, however, did not seem to be a result of the foreign traders' impressions of indigenous dress, nor did they seem to have a large impact on island experiences, as they were worn and treated as an indigenous form of dress. It was not until the missionaries began work on the islands in the late 1830s that Western forms and styles of clothing were incorporated into the dress of the islanders. This incorporation was, to greater and lesser extents, due to the efforts of the missionaries, the majority of whom had very distinct interpretations of the meaning of indigenous dress which can be seen to be reflected in their photography.

The first missionary work in Vanuatu was begun in 1839 by John Williams of the London Missionary Society. He visited Futuna, Tanna and finally Erromanga, where he was
tragically killed. But the efforts of the London Missionary Society continued, as they left teachers from Rarotonga and Samoa on the islands. Later in 1842 missionary George Turner lived on Tanna for eight months in order to work with these communities. These efforts, however, had little impact as the teachers had to spend most of their energies learning survival techniques which left no time to share their beliefs with community members (Ibid, 69).

In 1848 the missionary work within the islands was taken over by the Presbyterian churches of Nova Scotia and Scotland. In this capacity John and Charlotte Geddie traveled to Aneityum, the southern most island in the Vanuatu group and finally a Christian life-style began to materialize. By 1852 the Presbyterian churches had raised enough money to send assistance to the Geddies. The man to come to their aid was Rev. John Inglis from Scotland. The Geddies and Inglis set in place many large-scale building projects as a means to distract the community from indigenous practices. After both the Geddies and Inglis had completed their missionary work, James Hay Lawrie was sent to Aneityum to take over. The Presbyterians remained in the south of the Vanuatu islands, while Anglican missionaries began to work on the Northern and Central islands a year later. Catholic missionaries did not arrive until the 1880s (Bolton 2003, 127). The process through which missionaries experienced indigenous clothing and islanders experienced Western clothing were varied and depended a great deal not only on the differences in traditions found within each island community but also on the different forms of Christianity and the specific personalities and personal interests of each particular missionary.

This chapter will explore the photographic work of Mr. James Hay Lawrie. His collection of photos can be read as a description of his visual experiences or more precisely as his interpretation or perception of those visual experiences. As with many missionaries in
Vanuatu, Lawrie brought with him to the islands both visual and conceptual frameworks which structured his vision of the indigenous textiles. Lawrie’s concepts and visual memory of how gender looks contributed a great deal to his interpretations of these textiles. This assumption of gendered appearances is revealed in his photographic work. Within this same collection of Lawrie’s images we can also see how his views of time influenced or even constructed his impressions of Ni-Vanuatu textile art.

**James Hay Lawrie**

Although the majority of missionaries in the Pacific shared common interpretations of indigenous textiles as markers of heathenism and many did use photography as a means of representing these interpretations, one individual’s photographic work within the islands of Vanuatu stands out. James Hay Lawrie invested much of his energies in the field and then back in Europe on the construction of albums of photos which represent Ni-Vanuatu individuals and their conversion to Christianity. Lawrie and his wife arrived on the island of Aneityum in 1879. At this point Western style clothing had already been introduced to the communities by the previous missionary Mr. Inglis, who had also began training men as servants, guides and assistants to the mission. The island women had been receiving domestic training by the missionary wives.

Before their posting in Vanuatu the Lawries had lived in Leith, Scotland. Here Mr. Lawrie was greatly influenced by the Great Revival; a movement within the Presbyterian Church which focused directly on the scriptures and a more personalized relationship with Christ. After this experience the Lawries accepted the position on Aneityum through the Free Church of Scotland and settled in Inglis’ old home (Adams 1998, Lawrie as Missionary). Upon his arrival Lawrie started a young men’s association to develop ‘the conventions of the intelligent’ (Letter written by Mr. Lawrie March 16th 1880). He also

41
started a school which was, in fact, primarily left in the hands of Mrs. Lawrie. Within the context of the school, she would offer prizes ‘of articles of clothing which the successful scholar may require’ to the students with the best written work (Letter written by Mr. Lawrie August 30th 1880).

Although Lawrie had already been working for the mission as a layman for about six years in Vanuatu, he was called to Australia in 1885 so that he could be ordained by the Presbyter of Sydney. After this event his fellow missionaries put him in charge of the entire island and he quickly returned to his post. He and his wife stayed on the island for another three years; in 1888 they departed for Scotland, where they remained for two years. Once again they returned to the island in April of 1890. Throughout their time living on the island, Mr. Lawrie was reported to have been open to ideas and some practices that today would be known as ‘kastom.’ He was, however, opposed to the merging of Ni-Vanuatu traditions including song, dance and particularly dress with Christian traditions (Adams 1998, The Presbyterian Mission).

Upon the Lawries’ final return to the island in 1890, Mrs. Lawrie began to show signs of mental illness. She was later placed in the Sydney mental institution, at which point Mr. Lawrie attempted to hand in his resignation to the church. His resignation was denied, but he was granted a longer leave of absence. Both of the Lawries returned to Scotland, while the mission was attended by a Mr. Gunn. In 1894 Mr. Lawrie returned to the island alone. He was disappointed to find that many male community members had continued to use and abuse kava, the intoxicating drink made from the root of the kava plant, in his absence. He become discouraged and returned to Scotland within one year and the entire family was relocated to Sydney (Ibid, Lawrie as missionary).
It was during the period of his wife's illness on the island and her placement in the hospital that Lawrie began to express an anthropological or scientific interest in the island communities. He would in fact often comment in his writings on some aspects of island material culture such as the slit gongs and indigenous forms of dress. His impressions and interpretations of the island textiles can, however, be seen more clearly in his photographic work then in his written records.

**Photographic Work**

After Mr. Lawrie left the islands for the final time and returned to Scotland, he constructed several albums of his photographs. These albums were duplicated and sent out to many parishes. Mr. Lawrie believed that members of the European Christian communities needed to see the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. It is also probable that Lawrie hoped that upon seeing this transformation the European Christians would be more inclined to donate money and supplies to the missionary efforts in the Pacific (Ibid, Lawrie as Missionary).

The photographs were primarily taken during Mrs. Lawrie's illness from 1891 to 1894. All images were taken by Mr. Lawrie himself, but unfortunately there are no records of his photographic training. He worked with two cameras- the first a folding wooden type which required deliberate positioning of his subjects. The second camera used dry plate and was able to capture some 'action' shots, meaning that the subject's pose would not have to be held as long as when using the folding camera. It has been noted, however, that Lawrie did stage all of his photos and none were taken as snapshots of activities already in progress (Ibid, Lawrie as Photographer). We may therefore assume that the manners in which the textiles are portrayed within these photos are to a great extent representative of Mr. Lawrie's perception.
Although the film would have had to be developed and fixed before the long journey home, the construction of the albums and the writing of the captions would have had to be completed after Mr. Lawrie’s return to Scotland. Printing the photos on the island would have been impossible due to the fact that no photo lab was constructed on the island at the time of the Lawries’ mission. It is even possible that the albums were not organized with accompanying text until after the family’s move to Sydney in 1884. Evidence of this delay comes from one of the captions which states ‘natives of Tanna showing their hair cord: a custom peculiar to the four southern islands of the New Hebrides, and in 1912 practiced in parts of Tanna’ (Ibid, Lawrie as Photographer). The date here suggests that the albums were not compiled until sometime after 1912 because he would have had to be aware of practices taking place on this island in 1912, which was a number of years after he had departed Vanuatu in 1884. It is therefore probable that Lawrie put these collections together years after his experiences on the islands. This delay may be an important point as it signifies that the way in which Lawrie framed the textiles in his photos represents his impressions of the material culture at the moment he was experiencing it, while the organization and written account represents his memory of past experience and probably more directly reflects the aim of publication.

One major aspect of this organization is the division of the photographs into two distinct classifications of ‘heathen’ and ‘Christian’ subjects. Although this may seem like a very simple form of categorization, it does not appear to reflect the missionary reality in the island community as has been reported within many written accounts. Mr. Lawrie himself had reported through his letters that the process of individuals’ conversation to Christianity is not such a clear-cut progression, and members of the communities could not have been simply divided into those who are saved and those who are not. Many individuals claimed
association with the church for political reasons or were under pressure from their friends and families without believing the missionaries’ ideas or giving up old indigenous practices. Lawrie reports in a letter dated December 4th, 1884 that ‘a section of the community have all along been taking Christianity with only one hand, while with the other they have been clinging to their old heathen customs.’ From many letters of Mr. Lawrie it seems clear that defining an individual as purely ‘heathen’ or purely ‘Christian’ might have been somewhat problematic and therefore the written captions reflect at best a simplification of Lawrie’s experiences for the benefit of the Christian supporters of missionary efforts.²

Lawrie’s captions are also very general and contain no information that would make possible identification of the individuals who are imaged. This form of written description is common in missionary accounts which attempt to represent for their Western viewers a general type of person and not a specific individual (Thomas 1992, 372). In this case, however, the generalizing nature of the captions might also reflect Lawrie’s distance from the subjects as they were written so long after he had lived within the community.

Gender and Textiles

As European missionaries such as Lawrie encountered these diverse communities of Vanuatu, they brought with them their own concepts of how gender roles should be navigated. These ideas existed not only at a discursive level within the minds of the missionaries but also formed a visual memory of how ‘proper’ gender roles looked. As they physically saw gender roles that were new to them, they were forced to place them within this pre-existing visual framework. Therefore the missionaries’ interpretations of indigenous textiles had also to be placed within their visual memories of how gender appeared. Again, as with Cook’s crew, the labor role of island women largely affected how indigenous textiles were seen and photographically represented. The concept of the nuclear family also seems
to have played a role in how the missionaries saw the island communities. The interpretations of indigenous textiles were framed by these concepts, as the missionaries saw the islander's dress within the context of a very different definition of family.

Within Lawrie's photographic collection, indigenous textiles and dress are used as a marker of women's roles in the island communities which Lawrie saw as degrading laborious positions. This interpretation can be most clearly seen in the photos labeled 15 and 16 within the finished albums, shown on consecutive pages. Lawrie's 15th photograph positioned just before the 16th in the finished album represent the companion to photo number 16, an image of a man with his object of indigenous material culture posed on the beach. The 15th photo shows a women standing on the beach in her indigenous dress; a multi-fiber skirt reaching down to her feet (See figure 11). The object of material culture that symbolizes the lifestyle of the 'heathen' woman is a woven basket carried on the back. These baskets can be used for various chores; here Lawrie captures it being used to transport firewood. The body language of the woman is very different from the man's as she stands with her legs close together and arms folded against her chest, while he poses with his spread apart and his hand on his hip. Body language in photos can be very difficult to read because positions captured might have been held only for a brief moment. Yet, from the difference in the poses of the Ni-Vanuatu woman and man, we can at least assume that Lawrie, through his choice of photos to include in his album, hoped to portray island women as somewhat degraded in their communities, as she looks much less comfortable and confident than her male counterpart. The caption once again calls attention to the material culture which is included in the frame by stating 'Native of Tanna: Grass skirt made from pandanus leaves.' Through this image we can see clearly Lawrie’s interpretation of the island women's skirts and basket weaving. To Lawrie these pieces of material culture are markers of
'heathen' women's roles as the beast of burden within the community. In Lawrie's report to Australasian Association of the Advancement of Science he goes as far as to state 'the wife was to all intents and purposes the slave of the husband' (1892). Clearly the women's textiles are being framed in this photograph by this interpretation of island gender roles.

In the 16th photo a man is posed on the beach (See figure 12). He is shown wearing a garment of indigenous dress draped around his hips. His left hand rests on his side in a casual fashion while his right hand holds a bow that is resting on the ground. His chest is pushed forward and his head cocked to one side. This body language gives the impression of a strong and proud man who seems to be living a comfortable lifestyle and is in command of his environment. Within this context the representation of the bow becomes a symbol of the men's roles as protectors of the community. The caption accompanying this photo states 'Native of Tanna 1891: War bow about 5ft 4in long, made of ironwood' further calling attention to inclusion of the bow and its use in war. To Lawrie and perhaps to his European viewers the image represents the 'heathen' lifestyle as being filled with dangers and warfare. In a Report to the Australian Association of the Advancement of Science, Lawrie comments on this lifestyle; 'club law is the rule rather then the exception' (1892). In terms of Lawrie's impressions of gender, the bow at rest also becomes a symbol of men's relaxed lifestyle, where although the weapon is carried by the man, he has no direct and apparent need to make use of it and thus is simply viewed as being preoccupied with the idea of warfare without truly being in need of protecting this family.

It must also be noted that photo 15th not only represents an island woman working but she is performing a specific type of work; one which require the use of her physical strength and takes place outside of the confines of the village. This is a significant distinction as Lawrie has chosen to represent an island woman engaged in a form of labor
that looks very different from his visual memory of women’s work in Europe. Although island women would also cook meals, and weave textile creations of great beauty within the village, Lawrie has chosen to display a woman working in a much different manner than he and his audience would have been used to seeing. Lawrie does give detailed descriptions of women’s creative contributions within his written work stating...

The method of making the skirt is simple and interesting; each native female is the possessor of several pandanus trees, which are jealously guarded as family property. When a skirt is to be made, a bundle of long leaves are gathered; the prickles are removed with a sharp knife made from a reed or from a split bamboo; each long narrow leaf is chewed separately to extract the juice and to soften the fibre. When a number of leaves are chewed, say about ten dozen, the bundle is placed in water for 4 days and afterward hung up to dry; each leaf is again scraped and carefully smoothed with a sharp shell; the whole is then neatly plaited onto a strong cord made from the inner bark of a tree.

Although Lawrie includes this written description in an account of the women of Aneityum, he does not chose to represent visually this creative side of the women’s work. In the written record Lawrie even comments that plaited textiles are in fact the ‘most valuable exchange property’ within the communities. It is significant, therefore, that he does not chose to visually represent in any one of his 18 ‘heathen’ photographs the aspect of women’s material culture that he states has the most value; rather he displays a woman engaging in work that would seem most different and even shocking to his European Christian audience. This attention to revealing the differences between island gender roles and European gender roles reflects the aim and intention of Lawrie’s albums. They were in fact intended to generate donations from the European church communities for the missions by demonstrating the progress of the missionaries and most importantly the need for Christianity within these island communities, while the written record was primarily intended for anthropological use. By visually representing the heavy manual labor in which the women of the islands engage and not representing their valuable creative contributions,
Lawrie hopes that the European audience will feel sympathy and maybe even outrage at this different definition of gender and financially support the mission's efforts.

Significantly, not all missionaries working on the islands of Vanuatu had precisely the same aims in their photographic work although many were focused on trying to raise funds. If we compare the photographs of Lawrie with the photographs of other missionaries working in these islands, many differences may emerge. For example one of the best known photos of a 19th century Ni-Vanuatu woman in her indigenous dress was taken by Rev. Hugh Robertson. Robertson had arrived for missionary work on the island of Erromanga in 1875. His hopes for the island communities were similar to Lawrie's in wanting to spread Christianity and generally 'improve' the lives of the islanders, including discontinuing the drinking of kava and replacing indigenous dress with Western styles of clothing (Lawson 1994, 124). Robertson's background or pre-existing framework and his approaches to fund raising were significantly different from Lawrie's and are reflected in his impressions of women and their indigenous textiles and in his photographic representation of these impressions. His most well known image of indigenous textiles show a Ni-Vanuatu woman neatly clothed in a layered skirt of decorated barkcloth with a barkcloth top and various ornaments including a necklace and coconut shell armbands (See figure 13). The framing of this textile is drastically different then Lawrie's photograph 15th although both are meant to represent the 'heathen' woman. Robertson's image shows a woman in profile with her arms at her sides. She is pictured within the boundaries of the village and is not engaged in any form of labor. It seems clear that she is modeling the dress, as she stands in profile providing a view of the many layers of material constructing her skirt. Unlike Lawrie's representation, this woman is imaged as almost proudly displaying her creative product.
The reason for these missionaries' different portrayals has to do with their aims in creating photos. While Lawrie wanted to use the textiles as part of an overall image displaying the need for missions to 'save' the island women from their difficult and labor intensive lives, Robertson seems to wish to show the interesting and elaborate nature of the dress. Robertson is well known for his vast collecting of material culture in Vanuatu. These collections were either donated to Western museums for the education of the general public or they were sold in order to raise money for the missionary activities (Ibid, 140-141). This photograph of women's dress was therefore probably not meant to inspire the Christian audience to give money to 'save' the island women; rather it was meant to show the authenticity and exotic nature of the textiles in order for them to interest the museum-going public and to fetch a better prize in the sale of the items. Therefore, we may see that both the missionaries' visual frameworks and their specific agenda determined their forms of photography.

The theme of the labor of island women is continued in the second half of Lawrie's albums which portray Christian women. The one photo that most clearly represents the changing of gender roles under the influence of Christianity is the photo numbered 21, captioned 'Washing day Aneityum 1891' (See figure 14). This photo shows six Ni-Vanuatu Christian women engaged in labor that establishes the missionaries' and the European audience's pre-existing vision of how gender roles look. These women are all wearing Western style dress and are washing their Western fabrics in wash tubs, while at the same time being employed in childcare. The scene is set within the confines of the village as we can see buildings and a fence behind the women. Lawrie is attempting through this photograph to reveal the role of Christianity in creating gendered labor with which Europeans would be comfortable. Christianity is seen here as 'saving' the island women by
placing them within the domestic sphere of community life. As Bolton has stated in regard to this topic 'They [missionaries] held that women properly belonged in the domestic domain of the home and deplored their participation in activities outside of it' (2003, 130). And indeed the wearing of Western fabrics which signaled a person's conversion to Christianity did inhibit women from working in the gardens, carrying firewood and collecting shellfish. Moreover, Western fabrics took up much of the women's time in maintenance. Thus within Lawrie's photos indigenous textiles also are seen as devices enabling women's work outside of the home, which must have been interpreted by the missionary as abuse.

Lawrie's photos of island dress were also framed by his concepts of what constitutes a family. For Lawrie, as for many missionaries, a family or close kin support groups should look like a nuclear family. Again it seems to have been Lawrie's hope to visually align indigenous dress with extensive indigenous kinship ties which may have seemed surprising or even immoral to his Western audience. This alignment reveals Lawrie's interpretation of the textiles as markers of non-Christian or 'heathen' existence. In the photo numbered 9 in Lawrie's album we find an image of a group of young men and boys on the beach carrying bows and spears (See figure 15). This is one of many photos within the first 18 images representing 'heathen' that show a large group of males with unknown kin connections grouped together. Again they are pictured with their associated elements of material culture; the weapon. The next photo in the album number 10 shows a group of women and young girls on the beach (See figure 16). Their elements of material culture include the long multi-fiber skirts and baskets for carrying goods on the back. In fact the caption even reads 'Natives of Tanna carrying food. Carrying bundles of pandanus leaves. No covering worn until 10 or 12 years.' We see in both an attention to the gender roles of woman as the
laborers of the communities, as well as Lawrie's impressions of 'heathen' life as consisting of large same sex groups with no clear defining kin relationships. When coupled with the same sex groupings, the indigenous textiles might reveal Lawrie's interpretation of them as an additional physical symbol of an immoral lifestyle.

In comparison, images from the second half of Lawrie's albums which visually record Christian island lives often show a grouping of a nuclear family including a wife, a husband and their children. These images look very similar to Western family portraits of the time. One such image number 22 in Lawrie's album shows one man and one woman both seated with the woman holding a small baby on her knee (See figure 17). Significantly, along with this new way of posing his subjects, Lawrie also shows the family dressed in Western style clothing. The man is wearing a dress suit; the woman a long cotton dress and the child is also fully clothing is a white long dress. It seems Lawrie saw the Western style dress and the regrouping of family connections as part of the same stage of converting to Christianity.

Missionaries' impressions of island community gender roles do seem to have influenced the manner in which Ni-Vanuatu textiles were interpreted. The material was seen as a symbol of women’s labor which was so different than the work preformed by upper class European women in the late 19th century. It was this physical, manual labor that Lawrie focused on in order to reveal the need for missionary action, while the creative element of women’s work was overlooked. Clearly missionaries such as Lawrie came to the island communities with a pre-existing visual concept of how gender should look. When they were met with contradicting images of gender they were forced to place them within the category of a 'heathen' lifestyle that needed to be altered by Christian influence. The textiles of these
communities were also placed within this category and were in fact framed by the missionaries’ impressions of islander’s gendered relationships.

**Missionary Concepts of Time**

Concepts of sacred or Judeo-Christian time have been interwoven with the idea of recording history since the beginning of the historical discourse tradition in Europe. Fabian explains that this concept of time consists of ‘a sequence of specific events that befall a chosen people’ (1983, 2). Furthermore, these events are not random happenings but rather are meaningful markers on the path to teleology. Every event that is recorded as historical fact must in someway further the chosen people’s connections with the Christian God. As specific events happen and are recorded, they are seen as one point in this meta-narrative of salvation. Although Fabian discusses this sacred version of time as having been the dominant mode of pre-Enlightenment thought, Thomas has revealed that this manner of perceiving time was very much in use in the written records of missionaries working in the Pacific Islands (Thomas, 1992). We may also see that these concepts of the narrative of salvation in many ways affect Lawrie’s vision of time, which is made apparent in both his interpretation and representation of indigenous textiles.

The organization of the photos in the albums is the clearest evidence of his vision of time as a narrative of salvation. The photos are not arranged in what we might think of as ‘chronological’ order, placing each photo in the order that he had taken them, even though this information was known to him and is present in the captions. Rather, Lawrie has placed the photos in an order that reflects a movement of island individuals from a stage or state of heathenism through conversion to a stage of Christianity. As previously mentioned, this representation does not reflect the process of conversion as stated in Lawrie’s written record, where a much more complex picture of salvation emerges. This complexity was excluded
from Lawrie’s photographic work, most probably in order to more directly convince his audience of the usefulness of the missionary work. The conversion process actually includes individuals going back and forth from indigenous beliefs to Christian faith depending on the evidence of benefits. For example, when an illness took over the community many people saw it as a result of so many turning to Christianity; thus they returned to older indigenous practices. When a man who rejected Christianity was lost at sea, many abandoned older practices to keep themselves safe. Conversion also often depended on political pressure, as many would calculate the advantages of aligning themselves with the Christian missionaries.

During Lawrie’s time in Vanuatu, indigenous individuals seemed to be taking some aspects of their teaching and leaving others. In all cases of missionary activity, conversion was never a one-way process where people simply made a choice to become Christian and then fully entered a completely new lifestyle. This is, however, exactly the picture of missionary effort that we see in Lawrie’s albums: the first 18 photos represent the old heathen life, while the last 18 represent the changes that come with conversion to Christianity. These images unfold as though the simple passage of time had created a new Christian island society.

Much of the ‘progress’ is shown within the albums, as indigenous textiles and dress disappear and are replaced with Western styles and fabrics. The very first photograph in the album is meant to represent the primary stage of heathenism, where Christianity has not yet had any influence (See figure 18). Four men stand together resting their hands on each other’s shoulders. Their postures seem somewhat relaxed and informal. Two younger boys crouch in front of the men, again appearing relaxed and somewhat interested in the photo taken. With the exception of the young boy in front on the right, their hair is long and tied back from their faces. Three of the men only wear a namba, while the man second form the left has a mat tied round his waist. This appearance would have been typical in the village as
late as 1894, the date in the caption. Although this is the first image in the albums, we can
tell by this date that it was actually taken near the end of Lawrie’s work here. The caption
goes on to state ‘Dress covering made of green leaves removed each morning and bound
with sinnet made from cocoanut husks.’ Lawrie here calls the audience’s attention to the
dress of the ‘heathens’ in order to reveal their placement in the early stages of the conversion
narrative. Behind the men is a thatched home which adds to the portrayal of these men in
the early stages of a history.

In Lawrie’s 18\textsuperscript{th} photograph which is the last of his ‘heathen’ images, he begins to
show a progress toward salvation (See figure 19). Six men are shown working and smoking
in the fields. They are wearing Western fabric wrapped around their waists in the same style
as indigenous textiles would be. The caption of this image reads ‘Natives of Tanna partly
civilized 1891: The loin cloths made of calico are the first stage in civilization.’ In Lawrie’s
written text we see that he has now altered his definitions of ‘stages’ from a religious term;
\textit{heathen} to a social evolutionary term; \textit{civilized}. Once again the dress is pointed to as a marker
of their progress towards ‘civilization’ i.e. Christianity. Interestingly, the date on this image
reveals that in terms of a scientific definition of time this image was taken 3 years before the
first image which represents the earliest stage in salvation.

In the second half of Lawrie’s album we see the story of salvation progress as fully
Christian men and women are imaged. In photo 25 we see an image comparable to the first
image in the album (See figure 20). Indeed, it does seem that Lawrie wanted his audience
to be able to make clear comparisons between a heathen stage and a Christian stage. In this
image 5 men are shown with the 3 older looking men sitting on a beach and the 2 younger
men sitting on the ground in front of them. In this image the men’s postures seem more
Western as they place their hands in their laps or folded in front for their bodies. The most
remarkable difference, however, is in the dress of the men. In the Christian photo, 4 of the men are fully dressed in Western suits with 2 of them wearing neckties. One of the younger men seems a little more casually dressed but still wears a long sleeve Western shirt and long pants. He is also the only man in this image to be barefoot. The men’s hair is short and their faces stern and in control. This time the men are shown in front of a flat wall of a building. Lawrie’s caption reads ‘Civilized natives Aneityum.’ This image reveals Lawrie’s interpretation of the Christian life as being intrinsically connected to a Western lifestyle, very importantly including dress. Specifically, Western dress of that time was designed to cover as much of the body as possible, which would not have been as practical in the warmer climates of the Pacific. Since the 1970s, however, the Western style of clothing has altered to include dress which exposes much of the body, while in Vanuatu and in many other parts of the Pacific the older traditions of covering the body still remain. Older Western style clothing is seen and represented by Lawrie as a marker of the final event in the story of salvation with the natives saved by their Christian faith.

These concepts of time are also evident in the missionaries’ written records. In fact, points in the missionaries’ narrative of conversion in Vanuatu are often connected to specific Biblical events. The sequence of meaningful events on the path to salvation is seen to be repeated in present-day Vanuatu. Missionary Fred Paton who worked in the islands of Vanuatu in the late 19th century commented: “The man who fears the Missionary’s God wears the Missionaries gift of clothing. Was it not, after all, an act of spiritual import when our first parents clothed themselves?” (Quarterly Jottings 1985, as quoted in Bolton 2003, 128). While Robert Lamb, Presbyterian superintendent to the medical mission in Ambrym in 1892 stated: ‘The story of Eden is being repeated before our eyes. The black man has been tempted to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge’ (Lamb 1905, Preface VII). Lawrie
himself likened the islander’s creation story of Inhugaraig hooking the island while fishing and pulling it to the surface to the biblical story of the flood. From these accounts we can see that missionaries were linking significant Biblical events to events taking place in contemporary Vanuatu in order to reveal marked points on path of salvation. From Lawrie’s photographic collection we see that missionaries saw their travels through space to new communities as a journey backwards through their own narrative of salvation, where they may see all the significant, and in their minds inevitable, events unfold as the Christian God is experienced. The indigenous textiles of Vanuatu were framed by this narrative and thus became interpreted and represented as signifiers of points in a story that will unavoidably lead to ‘Christian times’ or a Christian present.

**Conclusions**

From this detailed examination of one specific missionary worker’s interpretations and photographic representation, I believe that we can gain a sense of how the Christian missionaries viewed these Ni-Vanuatu textiles from within their own framework which was steeped in the ideology of European gender roles and Christian concepts of the history of salvation. The impressions constructed by these religious foreigners of textiles and in particular of clothing are not passive reflections; rather they functioned to shape the forms of dress accepted by Ni-Vanuatu communities. The missionaries’ interpretations of clothing as a marker of conversion was a view that was eventually adopted in Vanuatu and still is active in this nation today. In fact the missionary or ‘Mother Hubbard’ dress as it has come to be known is now the national dress of Vanuatu. Thus, I think that this exploration of missionary photography as a visual representation of visual interpretations is a clear example of the ways in which impressions, framings, and constructions of the physical world, can in fact influence, and in some cases fully alter, the material environment or culture. Not only is
the material world of dress changed visually, but individual multi-sensory experiences within this world are also forever altered. The full covering of the Ni-Vanuatu body is the most obvious example of this change, as it altered the ways in which men and women experience their physical and social worlds.

1 This text authored by Ron Adams in 1998 contains no page numbers. Thus, I have referenced the information from this text by indicating the subject heading under which the information can be found.
2 The complexity of the process of conversion on the island of Vanuatu is further documented in Missionary Robert Lamb's *Saints and Savages; The Story of Five Years in the New Hebrides*. As this publication attempts to take a more anthropological perspective he often notes the difficulties and even despair that the islanders deal with as they contemplate their acceptance or rejection of the missionaries.
Figure 11: 'Photograph # 15
Native of Tanna 1891', Lawrie

Figure 12: 'Photograph # 16
Native of Native of Tanna 
1891', Lawrie
Figure 13: Erromangan woman in traditional dress, Robertson

Figure 14: Photo # 21 Washing day Aneityum 1891, Lawrie
Figure 15: Photo #9 Tanna Natives- West Coast 1891, Lawrie

Figure 16: Photo #10 Natives of Tanna, Lawrie
Figure 17: Photo # 22 A Futunese family 1891, Lawrie

Figure 18: Photo # 1 Natives of Tanna 1884, Lawrie
Figure 19: Photo #18 Natives of Tanna Partly Civilized 1891, Lawrie

Figure 20: Photo #25 Civilized Natives Aneityum, Lawrie
Chapter Three
Science, Sexuality and Style in Art and Dress; The Photography of Felix Speiser
Introduction to Anthropology in Vanuatu

Until the early 1920s photography taken within Vanuatu was comprised almost entirely of images produced by explorers, travelers and missionaries. Swiss anthropologist Felix Speiser saw these sources as greatly restricted and often promoting their own agendas (Speiser 1923, 4). Therefore he set out to complete an extensive documentation of the lifestyles and material culture of Ni-Vanuatu communities. Speiser hoped that his documentation would in some way preserve these cultures, or the knowledge of these cultures, primarily for future generations of Western scholars. He went about this task in the belief that the Ni-Vanuatu cultures were headed for destruction due to their increased contact with Western influences. Owing to this belief, Speiser also aspired to publish this material in order to influence and alter the destructive habits of the cultures of religious, economic and political colonialism in the area.

In reviewing the previous written records on Vanuatu, Speiser constructed a vision of island life and culture as deteriorating through the often very negative experiences of interacting with Western influences (Ibid, 12). Early visitors from Europe included whalers, sandalwood traders and labor recruiters. Exchanges with these commercially-oriented foreigners usually escalated into violence. The missionaries working within the island communities brought attention to this violence in their home countries. They wished for more governmental control over the foreign representatives of Western industry. In response Australia banned the importation of labor under the Pacific Islands Labourers Bill on December 17th, 1901. However, the plight of the island communities still seemed to worsen as the copra trade increased and copra trading posts were established. These primarily commercial interactions were still far from peaceful as even larger French and English firms began to set up plantations. Aside from some missionaries, like James Hay
Lawrie, these foreign visitors showed no real interest in the cultures of the islands. Most of the traders were there just to collect raw materials and return home. However, from very early on in colonial history there were some European plantation owners who did want the political structure of the island communities to be adjusted. Due to an influx of French colonists in 1876, these settlers began to request that the French annex the islands. The Presbyterian missionaries, however, thought that this association with France would harm their work in the indigenous communities. These missionaries began campaigns throughout Australia and England to encourage an English annexation. It took until 1902 before both countries had offices in Vanuatu, and in 1906 an agreement of a condominium was signed in Port Vila, which became the capital of the island nation then known as the New Hebrides (Speiser 1923, 14-15).

It was within this particular political atmosphere that Speiser began his research. Prior to his study, only one other anthropological text had been published: Robert Henry Codrington's *The Melanesians; Studies in their Anthropology and Folklore*. This ethnography was published in 1891 and focused primarily on the social or intellectual aspects of island culture. Speiser studied Codrington's work and the writings of Western travelers and missionaries (Ibid, 2). Speiser's ethnography, in essence, represents an attempt to fill in the gaps left by these previous accounts by focusing on a systematic and meticulous documentation of the island communities' production, use, and experiences with material culture.

In the first section of this chapter on Speiser's ethnography, I hope to explore his academic background as well as the context under which he worked in order to examine how he developed his interpretations of the Ni-Vanuatu material culture, specifically regarding his interpretations of textiles. Once again Speiser's photographs will here be viewed as primary evidence of his own visual interpretations of these textiles. I will,
therefore, first provide a review of these photographs and explore some themes found in his perceptions of the textiles. In the final two sections I will then focus on Speiser’s concepts of gender and time as they frame his interpretations and are expressed in his photography.

**Introduction to Felix Speiser**

Felix Speiser was born in Switzerland in 1880 and from very early in his life he was influenced by relatives on his mother’s side, including his uncle Paul Sarasin and a cousin Fritz Sarasin, who were scholars in zoology and anthropology. By 1903 both relatives had become internationally renowned due to their field work as evolutionary natural scientists (Kaufmann 1997, 411). From Speiser’s interests in theories of evolution and prehistory it can be seen that his uncle in particular had a great impact on his interests and his visions of the world around him. Speiser’s formal education, however, began with a focus on the hard sciences. He studied chemistry in Germany and returned to Basel in 1904 to receive a PhD in this field, specializing in color chemistry (Kaufman 1997, 305). As his work carried him to the United States in 1906, he made a decision to travel alone by horseback to visit the Hopi tribe of Native Americans. This trip proved to be a major turning point in Speiser’s life as he then made the decision to change his field of study to ethnography, although his abilities as a scientist continue to be seen clearly in both his written and photographic work.

In 1907 Speiser began a project of schooling himself in anthropological research methods and theories at the museum and university levels. He continued his studies under the direction of Professor Felix von Luschan at the Ethnographic museum of Berlin, which at this time was well known as a leading center in anthropological study. For unknown reasons it was within this context that Speiser developed a compelling curiosity in the islands of Vanuatu (Ibid, 411). Due to this new interest Speiser then organized a two year field trip to Vanuatu that would leave in May of 1910 and return in July of 1912.
As the islands had just become a condominium two year prior to the trip, Speiser’s first stop was in Port Vila in order to address the colonial officials. He first met with the French resident commissioner, who, as it turns out, directed Speiser to begin his research in an area of the islands where there was no community present. When Speiser realized his mistake he quickly returned to Port Villa to meet with the English resident commissioner, Marton King. King at this point was very concerned over the depopulation of southern Vanuatu. He believed, as many did, that the complete disappearance of the indigenous communities was inevitable. He provided aid to Speiser as he hoped to ‘save’ as much of their material culture as possible before it no longer existed. King also hoped that revealing these objects to Western communities would encourage respect and sympathy from the public for the Ni-Vanuatu populations (Kaufmann 1996, 305). With King’s help and direction Speiser was able to travel across the many islands of Vanuatu collecting an enormous amount of material culture, information, observations, and photographs.

Speiser clearly shared the goals of King in terms of both helping the Ni-Vanuatu communities to survive in the face of what they perceived as a devastating situation and in his hope to preserve examples of the material culture of the islands to enhance Western knowledge of Pacific history. This form of ethnography became known as ‘salvage’ anthropology. The term, however, seems to imply a pillaging of the endangered island communities’ visual culture; a vulture-like image is called to mind, even though Speiser believed at the time that he was doing all in his power to help these communities survive the missionary and colonial intrusions. Speiser also had his own more scientific goal in mind. Therefore his documentation covered objects which are ‘typical’ of communities throughout Vanuatu. He hoped that by documenting the appearance and production of material culture
in these areas he would be able to place them on a timeline which, when compared with data from other areas of Melanesia, would reveal a picture of Pacific pre-history (Ibid, 305).

In fulfilling these goals, Speiser visited almost all the populated islands in only two years. Because he was constantly moving between islands, catching rides on boats of traders and plantations owners, he was unable to become close with the islanders or learn any of their languages (Speiser 1923, 3). These limitations could have in part led to the omission of much information on the meanings and functions of the material culture in his publications, but more probably these omissions were a result of his intended goals of detailed documentation for the propose of preservation. This documentation primarily consisted of Speiser's construction of written and photographic list of information, as he worked out of the scientific discourse which emphasized the exhaustive collection of large amounts of data.

After Speiser's return to Europe he continued his research by studying all the previous literature on Vanuatu including the accounts of missionaries, travelers and Codrington. He also viewed many collections of material culture held in museums throughout Europe. All of this information is made use of in his extensive publication. Due to the quality of this research, Speiser was hired as a professor of cultural anthropology at the University of Basel in 1914. In 1924 he traveled to the Brazilian Amazon and finally he returned to Melanesia from 1929 to 1931. During this final trip Speiser made visits to the North Solomon Islands, New Britain, New Ireland and areas along the Sepik. The research completed in these two years was used in combination with his data from the Vanuatu field trip to establish what he perceived as the prehistory of the Western Pacific.

**Review of Speiser's Photography**

Photography seems to be of great importance to Speiser's research and publications, as he attempted visually to document almost every piece of material culture that he
mentioned in his written text. The photos were taken on glass plates which were once again
developed on site to be printed later when he returned home. Very little information on the
specific types of cameras and supplies used by Speiser in this trip has been recorded. This is
a most unfortunate gap in the research, as this information could tell us more about the
limitations with which he was working. For those pieces of material culture which he was
unable to photograph he made sketches for his publications and for the file of the Museum
für Völkerkunde. The first publication was a book entitled Two Years with the Natives of the
Western Pacific, which was released in 1913 by the famous romance book company, Mills and
Boon. The book was written for a popular audience and included Speiser's personal
experiences and impressions. This first publication was created so that the forthcoming
ethnography could be solely devoted to scientific observations (Speiser 1923, 1). After
Speiser had completed his research on background literature, his ethnography was published
in 1923. It was in this text that his photos played a major role.

The organization of written and photographic text within this second volume
entitled Ethnology of Vanuatu is very telling in terms of how Speiser approached the material
culture of the island communities and how he viewed these varied physical worlds. Within
the interplay between his written words and his photos we are able to see Speiser's
scientifically-based frame of mind. By 'scientific' I am here referring to the so-called
‘objective’ observations of the physical attributes of objects, where information on physical
form is collected and compared not as a carrier of a collective social meaning, but rather as
hard evidence of experience used to support a theory or model of the scientist's creation.
Aspects of Speiser's scientific framework may be seen in the great detailing of the object's
form and production within the written text. This extreme attention to detail is included in
his written description of clothing. When discussing the dress of the Big Nambas of
northwestern Malekula, Speiser comments ‘Each piece is a narrow flat braid of plaited red-dyed pandanus (*Speiser’s* pl.43, fig 19) fringed along one side. These fringes are 50 to 70 centimeters length. The braids are now wound spirally round the penis, one piece round the other, so the fringes come together in its long axis and form a large train like a horse tail... I have found similar nambas, but smaller in size, in Northern Pentecost (*Speiser’s* pl. 43, fig.3)” (*Speiser 1923, 175) (See figure 21). Not only is Speiser recording the characteristics of each piece of textile while paying particular attention to the differences between regions, he is also accompanying each description with a reference to a photograph. The photographs are arranged in plates that allow a visual comparison of the textile he sees as associated, and they are framed in such a manner as to reveal the details he has documented in the written text. It seems that due to Speiser’s extensive background in scientific experimentation, he thought of the still camera as a means of providing hard evidence or data which he would later turn to in order to support his claims regarding the history of settlement throughout Melanesia. The photograph was for Speiser a documentary tool that could provide an objective view to complement his own research.

Much of Speiser’s scientific mental framework during his research on Ni-Vanuatu material culture may also be seen in his comparison and evaluation of previous visual and written works. In addition to his own photos, each description of a piece of material culture is compared to every reference to similar objects in missionaries’ and travelers’ published accounts. The claims of these Western writers and photographers are evaluated based on Speiser’s own observations. At times his observations are compared to ‘specimens’ in museum collections which are also imaged. After listing all published comments on men’s dress in Efate, for example, Speiser states that ‘none of these descriptions is very accurate...Examples from Efate attire are very rare in museums, the mats (*Speiser’s* pl.46,
figures 4-5 from Efate in the British museum may well be public aprons of this kind' (Ibid, 176) (See figure 22). Speiser, however, does not compare his photographic examples with the photos of other scholars or collectors; rather he re-photographs the examples held in museum collections. It seems probable that he is re-imaging the forms so that they are comparable to the forms in his other photographs without the influence of an alternative framing. Since Speiser sees photography as presenting raw data, his scientific approach requires that all variables including the framing of the photo must be equal, and only the object itself may change as the independent variable.

At the end of each of Speiser's sections he draws a conclusion or a theory based on his claims in the written text and supported by the evidence presented in photos. Most of these conclusions are comprised of the division of the island communities into stylistic regions based on similarities and differences in their material culture. Therefore, the photos are presented as an aspect of a form of scientific experimentation, with Vanuatu as a case study.

**Gendered Perceptions of Felix Speiser**

Although Felix Speiser did not specifically focus on aspects of gender in his Vanuatu research, it can be seen that concepts of the divisions of the female social role and the male social role did play into his claims and, in particular, into his photography. It is possible to see two distinctive ways in which Speiser's own pre-formed perceptions of gender acted as a filter or lens that constructed his views of textiles in the island communities. The first area where these perceptions are apparent is in his descriptions of the form of the textiles when used as dress. Through Speiser's written comments on 'modesty' and through his photos of Ni-Vanuatu men and women wearing their indigenous clothing, it seems clear that his interpretations of dress are in fact framed by his own views of gender. We again see these
views play into Speiser’s work as he discusses and photographs the production of material culture as divided into men’s and women’s creations. Here we find the beginnings of the division of visual works into categories of ‘art’ or meaningful male-created objects and ‘craft’ or female-created objects.

The chapter of Speiser’s written text that is devoted to ‘Dress and Ornament’ seems to be somewhat focused on sexuality, particularly in his attention to the interaction between dress and his Euro-centric notion of ‘modesty’- or which parts of the body are important to cover and why. It is in this theme of modesty that we find a contrast between the treatment of men and the treatment of women. It might be significant that in Europe at this time psychoanalytical themes had begun to be developed, among them the theories of Freud and others. In fact, in an earlier chapter entitled ‘The Human Factor,’ Speiser allocates an entire section to ‘Sexuality.’ In this section he comments that men’s modesty which is represented by their desire to cover the ‘glans penis’ or the very top of the penis is not of ‘natural origin’ but rather is a result of the fear of magic which is an essential part of the Ni-Vanuatu religion. Furthermore, Speiser goes on to state that ‘Modesty is just as pronounced in women as in men and seems to refer exclusively to the vulva and the anus. Here again the fear of magic may be a determinant and partly also fashion, just as the sense of shame is in any case largely rooted in fashion or habit’ (Ibid, 64). Although Speiser here does mention that ‘magic’ or spiritual reasons might also influence the modesty of women as it does men, he also makes a point of referring to the idea that fashion dictates modesty and not the other way around. This assumption was not mentioned when discussing the dress of men, and does seem somewhat irrational here as it begs the question: what then dictates fashion?

If one goes on to investigate Speiser’s chapter on dress, his representations of men’s modesty in clothing and women’s modesty in adornment diverge even further. Although in
the section on ‘Sexuality’ Speiser mentions that ‘magic’ or religious beliefs play a part in the reasons for modesty among both genders, it becomes clear in the section on clothing that he believes religious reasons are only significant for the men, while the women experience modesty or shame because of the invasion of ‘white people’ or aspects of colonial communities. When describing the nambas of the Big Nambas on Malekula, Speiser adds that ‘...the penis, although not tightly bound, never falls out of this sheath (this would be a grave dishonour for a man, since the glans penis, the actual shameful part, is particularly exposed to the evil eye and other dangerous influences)’ (Ibid, 175, parenthesis in original). Again when writing on men’s dress in Erromanga, Speiser attributes any sense of shame and the reason for the current fashion to the protection of the penis from attacks of magic, stating: ‘Among the men the feeling of shame is confined to the glans penis; it does not arise from any sense of impropriety, however, but reflects a fear of magic which can very easily attach itself to the urethral orifice’ (Ibid, 178). Hence the reasons that men’s indigenous fashion appear as they do are clearly explained by Speiser as directly related to the religious beliefs of the community.

Although magic has already been given by Speiser as one reason for women’s indigenous fashion, in the section on ‘Women’s Clothing’ we find no such explanation; rather, Speiser focuses on Ni-Vanuatu women’s modesty and view it as a reaction to European visitors and settlers. Even in the section on ‘Sexuality’ Speiser comments that, ‘If the natives are among themselves, the women’s sense of shame is never as pronounced, as it is in the presence of white people. Then the women feel under observation, their innocence is lost, and instinctively than adept a posture with their hands folded in front of their lap’ (Ibid, 64-65). In a sense Speiser seem to blame Europeans and specifically missionaries for the loss of natural freedom of sexuality from clothing. He goes on to state: ‘As regards to
the breasts the women originally had no feelings of shame at all. But as soon as they have
grown accustom to the ugly long calico dresses, they acquired such feelings…’ (Ibid, 65).

Modesty in island women continues to be a theme of Speiser’s work, as he discusses
women’s clothing in Santo. He comments that a leaf strip ‘is folding from the top round the
simple belt string and then passed between the legs so that it sticks out freely at the back and
fits closely on the vulva… it is curious to see how they manage to keep the leaf from slipping
and stop it from coming out of place even during hard work in the field’ (Ibid, 179). Here,
we find no explanation of the women’s modesty and certainly no mention of the fear of
magic. Again when Speiser describes the mats worn by women on the island of Malekula, he
expresses the area which women feel they must cover is the anus, but no mention of the
reason, particularly the fear of magic, is made (Ibid, 180).

Speiser’s photos reflect even more clearly his interpretation of the textiles in terms of
their relationship to modesty as a gendered experience. Among his published photographs
over 68 images depict individuals posing for the photos in their indigenous clothing. The
men of these photos are always standing proudly with their hands either by their sides or
behind their backs, whether they are shown in a frontal view or in profile (See figures 23
and 24). Although in the written text Speiser states that men made efforts to cover
themselves with their hands, no such image can be found. When compared to Speiser’s
photographs of women a significant difference may be seen. Although many women are in
similar positions as the men, there are also some photos of women making efforts to cover
themselves even further in the manner that Speiser also described in his written text. For
example two women use their hands to cover their genitals in what Speiser perceived as a
modest posture (See figures 25 and 26). Among photos that depict groups of women
Speiser shows that they may hide or attempt to cover their breast from him (See figure 27).
In one photo three of the five women turn their heads downwards, while two cover their chest with their hands. The women are tightly grouped together and seem to be supporting one another. A feeling or sense of modesty does seem to be present in Speiser's depictions. In photos of groups of men, the men are always shown standing tall, often with their shoulders thrown back (See figure 28). In this photo the men are spaced apart and have an air of confidence.

Naturally it is possible, and in fact probable, that the difference in the individual men's and women's body language in Speiser's photos came from their own emotions and indeed their feelings of confidence or shame. What must be remembered, however, is that Speiser made the decisions as to how each photo should be taken and which photos should be included in his publication. Also because he was developing these photos on site it would have been possible to re-take the photo if he was not pleased with the positioning or posture of the individual subject. Other evidence to support the idea that Speiser was the sole author of these images is the fact that his images directly and clearly support his claims in the written text that men's modesty is a rational result of their desire to protect themselves from magic, whereas women's modesty is a result of their victimization by colonial powers. While other sources such as the writing of missionaries represent no differences in men's and women's feelings towards their indigenous clothing, Speiser perceives that women are losing their natural freedom from bodily shame though their acceptance of Christianity. This shame of the Ni-Vanuatu women that Speiser literally observes and represents is due to his own frameworks which construct the island communities' cultures as deteriorating in the face of colonial influence. It is, however, unclear as to why Speiser would see women as more of a target for these influences then men. Perhaps he has carried with him to the Ni-
Vanuatu communities Western notions of women as weaker and more susceptible to spiritual influence.

Speiser's concepts of gender not only affect his interpretations and representations of an individual's relationship to clothing, but they are also transferred to the productions or physical creations of individuals within Ni-Vanuatu communities. In this transference Speiser begins to see objects as gendered entities. On this subject Margaret Jolly comments: ‘His{Speiser’s} stated preferences are not only for the arts of south Malekula, but more particularly for those pictorial forms which men are exclusively authorized to create, in the context of ancestral cults and funerary rites’ (1996, 274). As Speiser does not attribute any spiritual significance to textiles created by women, he therefore sees them as distinct from those objects that he has determined contain religious meaning. In Speiser's omission of the religious and meaningful elements of the textiles we can see the beginning of a division between those works labeled as ‘art’ and those labeled as ‘handicraft.’

This division is apparent in the organization and content of Speiser's written text, but is more clearly seen in the arrangement and content of his photographs. Through a comparison of photos of male-created objects with photos of female-created objects, two major variations may be seen in Speiser's interpretations and representations of Ni-Vanuatu art. First, we can see in the organization of the photos that Speiser views men's objects as valuable for their meaningful artistic content, while women's objects he sees only as valued for their technical qualities. Secondly, men's creations are shown in Speiser's photos performing their religious or social functions, while women's creations are only contextualized in their secular setting, revealing that Speiser does not see them as having spiritual significance for the community, possibly due to the fact that Speiser would not have had as much of an opportunity to speak with the island women.

76
This gendered division between sacred and profane objects can initially be seen through the content and organization of Speiser's written text. In the layout of his text, carvings and masks which are only constructed by men are dealt with in the chapters entitled 'Framework of Religion' and 'Interface Between Social Life and Religion.' Whereas, the production and use of textiles are dealt with in the chapter entitled 'Production and Exchange of Goods,' under the heading 'Handicrafts.' Merely from these simple headings we can begin to see an outline of Speiser's own mental framework emerge. To him textiles, and in particular those textiles which may be used in social ceremonies appear in an area of island life that is totally disconnected from religion or spirituality. As such, the textiles are valued not for religious meanings held in their artistic form, but rather only for their technical construction. Although Speiser might have had more difficulties speaking to the island women, he definitely saw the textiles use in religious ceremonies such as burials.

Within the content of Speiser's written text, this gendered division of objects is further explained by his view of men's creations as spiritually functional or devotional objects, while women's creations are merely active only in the economic facets of community life. He goes so far as to label these textiles 'Money Mats'; a title which signifies Speiser's attempts to place Ni-Vanuatu objects into his own pre-formed categories of types of objects. In the written section on 'Money Mats', Speiser deals mostly with the technical aspects of creating the textiles and of their social function says only that 'their value may reside in their size and their color patterns but not in any particularly artistic plaiting and, in the final analysis, like the value of most money is purely ideal. Money mats are closely associated with the mats in which the dead are swathed and, indeed, in northeastern Malekula the mortuary mats are later used directly as money mats' (Ibid, 238). Although Speiser is acknowledging that the textiles do hold a value, he does not investigate either the
social importance of this value nor does he explore any further implications of the textiles in other aspects of community life. Because Speiser does not mention any connections between the form of the textile and its meaning, it seems clear that he views the textiles as not containing meaning in their physical artistic forms. This omission is surprising considering that he is aware that ‘money mats’ also play a role in funerary rites. Clearly Speiser has separated the textiles created by women into a category where their social or spiritual functions become insignificant.

In his chapter on religion Speiser carefully explains each aspect of indigenous Ni-Vanuatu spiritual concepts, while continuously making reference to the specific male-created objects that might have a significant role in the practice of the belief. In one instance he asserts ‘If a man in Ambrym finds himself in trouble, he is most likely to take up a position in front of the statue of his ancestor (Speiser’s pl.105, fig.2) and play a monotonous tune on a flute until he hears a noise, as rustling in the branches, a twig breaking or the like, which, he believes, betokens the arrival of the spirits’ (Speiser 1923, 352). Throughout this chapter Speiser takes pains to clearly describe the spiritual functions of each male-created object, while in describing female-created textiles he only notes their economic use.

Like Speiser’s written text which is quite telling of his interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu objects as gendered, his organization of photographs also reveals that he views men’s objects as valued for their artistic nature and women’s textiles as valued for their technical attributes. Those male-created objects which Speiser sees as meaningful in their artistic forms or styles are arranged on plates around the objects’ shared themes or motifs. For example on one plate we can find photos of ‘dance masks,’ a ‘dance headdress,’ a ‘dance platform’ and a small figure in a dance-like pose illustrating the theme of a particular dance. This organization differs greatly from displaying all his photos of one type of object on one plate.
so that they may be directly compared (See figure 29). All of these objects are used in a ceremony which Speiser see as religious, which therefore establishes his vision of the objects as meaningful art. When dealing with textiles the forms are organized on plates so that the patterns from various regions may be compared to one another. (See figure 30). Drawings of patterns from Malekula, Pentecost, and Torres Island are shown in relationship to one other so technical difference may be seen.

A similar method of organization is used by Speiser when dealing with spears, which are only discussed in terms of their functions and their technical construction (See figure 31). Although spears are created by men, due to what Speiser perceived as their functional nature he interprets them as 'craft'. Thus both the textiles and spears are seen and represented by Speiser in a very different manner then his way of viewing and displaying the masks, carvings and headaddresses. They are seen as functional in their construction, being appreciated and evaluated only in terms of their technical production and not for the meanings which may be held in their artistic forms. Therefore just through Speiser's representations of the textiles, we may see that he places Ni-Vanuatu women's art into a category where, like the spears, they are viewed only for their technical attributes and not for their artistic qualities.

This separation becomes even more obvious when we compare Speiser's visual framing of objects created by men to the framing of objects created by women in his photography. In Speiser's discussion of the function of a male-created carving that provides spiritual protection, he refers to a photo of a man standing next to a carved wooden statue (See figure 32). The man in the photo seems to be posed next to the carving, in order to display for Speiser how the object may be religiously used. When framing the textiles for photographic representation, however, Speiser takes a very different approach which seems
to reflect his perception of their social or spiritual function. In Speiser's collection of photos we find no representation of the textiles, contextualized as 'mats' (See figure 33). Again the textiles are photographed only to represent their technical or visual elements and are never shown in the process of being exchanged or being used in funerary rites. Unlike the men's carvings women's textiles are not framed by their social importance. Also through Speiser's inclusion of a man, we gain a sense of scale in this photo. As such the largeness of the carving become a focus, while in the images of the mats we have no comprehension of the size of the objects.

These photos directly represent how Speiser viewed Ni-Vanuatu objects, and in particular his categorization of women's textiles. The organization of the photos first shows that Speiser interpreted the textiles as a technical production or craft, whereas objects that were created solely by men held meanings in their formal elements. Secondly the framing of Speiser’s photographs reveal his perception of textiles as having little or no social or spiritual function or significances within the island communities, while men’s artistic creations seemed to bridge a the gap between the religious or spiritual and social world. It is entirely possible that Speiser brought these notions with him from Western nations or more specifically, he retained a visual memory of women’s textiles as categorized under the label of ‘craft’ while carvings by men were framed within the category of ‘fine art.’

Perceptions of Art as Markers of Time

Throughout Speiser’s work on material culture, he seems to be continually searching for a scientific explanation of the artistic, stylistic or formal differences between objects from communities across the globe and within Vanuatu. It is in this search for explanation that we find Speiser’s concepts of time most influencing his perceptions of textiles and art in general. At this point in Western anthropological circles, ideas of evolutionary progress had
taken hold. Social theorists such as Spencer had incorporated Darwin's theories into models of social or community evolution. The passage of time had begun to be seen as itself creating progress or community achievements. Anthropologists worked with these concepts spatializing the theory of progress, where a living community's achievements marked its position on a timeline of evolution. Temporal distance became equal to distance through space. As such a living community's achievements symbolized for the anthropologist the evolutionary stage the community had reached. The final stage of evolution was represented by the achievements of the anthropologist's community, placing this community in the present and the rest of the world in the past gradually progressing to reach the present. Fabian comments that during this time in anthropology 'relationships between parts of the world (in the widest sense of both natural and sociocultural entities) can be understood as temporal relations. Dispersal in space reflects directly, which is not to say in simple or in obvious ways, sequence in Time' (Fabian 1983, 11-12).

To Speiser these achievements which mark the temporal positioning of a community included their artistic creations or material culture. In fact, Speiser based an entire theory of Melanesian history around this concept of artistic forms representing a community's placement in evolutionary time. He published three papers on this subject in which he made use of methods and theories from both his extensive background in the natural sciences and in cultural anthropology. From the natural sciences Speiser adopted the methods of direct observation, comparison and classification, while his focus on the theory of 'progression' through evolution came from his understanding of cultural anthropology. In these papers Speiser developed an evolutionary-based theory of Melanesian material culture, where art begins in a community as purely representational, then merely through the passage of time the forms mature into stylized designs. Speiser believed that as times passes the
representational form is copied over and over again until it eventually loses all connection to its original source and thus becomes a sign (Kaufmann 1997, 412). According to Speiser the first style seen in a community includes representations of human, animal or other natural forms. As these forms are copied they lose all visual association with the natural forms; all links to the observed forms are severed. In essence the representations are then meaningless until the community creates new religious or conceptual meanings. Therefore stylized or abstracted forms are most likely to be found in religious works (Jolly 1996, 274 and Kaufmann 1997, 412). It is most important to note in Speiser's theories that in order to trace a community's history through material culture there needs to be a basis of comparison. This comparison is needed in order to determine how far an artistic form has been abstracted, or how much progress the community has made over time. In the case of Melanesian communities, however, Speiser did not make comparisons between objects from a community's past and objects from the present community; rather he compared objects from communities distanced from one another by geographical, not temporal, space. Once again time and space are seen as equal factors.

Through these beliefs Speiser viewed Melanesian art as containing six principle styles. The material from the Vanuatu island group he later categorized in what he term the first or 'Primary Style,' which seemed to mean the most basic or general form of expression. The second style was the 'Curvilinear style'; found in Papua New Guinea. The third style was the 'Tami style. Speiser defined this style by its focused on angularity. He believed it was found in 'Austro-Melanesia.' The fourth style was titled the 'Beak style' and the fifth style; 'Korwar style.' The final style which Speiser called the 'Malanggan style,' was found in Northern Melanesia and seemed to have been appropriated from 'highly developed' communities of Indonesia and mainland Asia (Kaufmann 1997, 412). From these categorizations Speiser
concluded that the more ‘developed’ styles represented communities which were farther along on the evolutionary timeline, Vanuatu being nearest to the beginning of this line.4

The interesting point here is that all of Speiser’s observations were taking place at roughly the same time - in the present. But he was comparing objects in order to determine their temporal or evolutionary-based classifications. As such, textiles from Vanuatu were seen by Speiser as markers of an early or ‘primary’ stage in time, not as representative of an alternative placement in space. As Fabian suggests of all anthropologists, Speiser was not observing the ‘primary’ but rather he was thinking in terms of the ‘primary’ (1983, 18), meaning that because Speiser was looking at objects to see which come first in time, he could only see the objects categorized in this manner. In other words Speiser framed the Ni-Vanuatu textiles with his own visualization of objects as representing various stages in time.

This framing can also be seen in Speiser’s photographic work, as he continually uses an approach of ‘objective observation’ to signal that the object and specifically the textiles can be compared and contrasted purely by their formal elements in order to reveal their development over time (See figure 34). The textiles are shown completely decontextualized on a black or white background, revealing Speiser’s attention to only the formal aspects of the designs. Textiles from many communities throughout Vanuatu separated by geographical space are shown side by side in Speiser’s 1923 publication. They are also photographed in a manner which shows Speiser’s vision of formal comparison. The same portion of each textile is photographed in black and white, with the same lighting. In these photos we see that, to Speiser, the only variable that distinguishes textiles from one community from those of another is the formal design. These objectively observed changes are viewed by Speiser as changes that take place over time or history rather then across space. His photos reveal his imposed objective framing, which provides the bases for his
Comparisons. On these objective comparisons Speiser established his evolutionary classifications.

Concepts of time provided yet another framework through which Speiser viewed and photographically represented Ni-Vanuatu textiles. As previously stated Speiser thought the future of many communities in Vanuatu was fairly bleak. In fact, like the English colonial government in Vanuatu at that time, he believed that these communities were destined to either witness the destruction of their indigenous culture and/or become completely depopulated (Speiser 1922, 25). Therefore, in terms of his evolutionary timeline, Ni-Vanuatu communities were seen as a stage which would progress no farther and eventually become extinct. As Speiser witnessed many changes taking place within the island communities, particularly those changes which came under the influence of Western culture, he interpreted these transformations as representative of cultural decline not cultural evolution. The material culture of the island was once again framed in Speiser's mind within those concepts of time that result from cultural deterioration. In his ethnography he states: 'My principle was to acquire everything that could still be obtained of the objects constituting the native culture. However, when I was in the islands, the culture was already in a sorry state of decay almost everywhere, and I probably arrived only just in time to salvage what was left of a material culture that had once been so rich' (Speiser 1923, 2). From comments such as these, it can be clearly seen that the recent changes in the island communities were not viewed by Speiser as a natural stage in cultural evolution as one might expect, rather they were interpreted as destructive elements, which would cause the death of indigenous material culture. Framed by Speiser's ideas of the progression of time, the island textiles, specifically textiles made from Western fabrics, become symbols of the impending death of the communities' culture.
These Western fabrics were viewed by Speiser not only as symbols of the decay of indigenous culture, but also as one of the cause of the deaths of individual members of the communities.

European food and clothes add indirectly to the death-roll as agents in the spread of disease... Very few natives realize the danger of spending the day in wet clothes and rarely change them when wet. Women frequently wear several dresses, which are often soaked on rainy days. The people usually work and sleep in the same suit of clothes. This must be injurious to health, and yet some deny it... the wearing of clothes should be discouraged. Traders find a profit in the sale of clothing, and encourage its use; missionaries (except to some extent those of the Anglican Church) do not disapprove; some even go so far as to make clothing a condition of baptism. It cannot be too strongly urged upon the missionaries and traders that clothing is unnecessary for the native in their natural environment. Everything should be done to keep the people natural and unaffected, and to prevent a false modesty and artificiality... One of the most pathetic contrasts in the islands is the lithe and glossy skin of the healthy native and the dirty, over-dressed Melanesian masquerading as a white man.

(Speiser 1922, 30-31)

This passage represents the perspective from which Speiser viewed the island textiles of Western fabric. He clearly did not perceive islander community members as equal participants in the appropriation of Western fabric or Western style of clothing. To him these changes in clothing were the direct result of the influence of traders and missionaries with no agency being exercised by the Ni-Vanuatu population. Because he did not see the islanders' changes as the islanders' own, he could not see this transformation of clothing as a natural progression. One might assume that because of Speiser's adherence to evolutionary models of time he would be mostly like to see changes in material culture as progression; however, there is another concept of time at work here, wherein, changes inspired by Western communities are viewed as unnatural and even harmful. This additional perspective makes our understanding of Speiser's temporal framework even more complex. Although he interprets indigenous island textiles as markers of an early stage on the evolutionary timeline, with the cultural achievements of Western culture marking the present, he does not
see that Ni-Vanuatu communities could, in the future, progress to the stage of similar forms of cultural achievements. In sum, Speiser seems to be suggesting that Ni-Vanuatu textiles must only change through the passage of a great period of time, without the unnatural influence of communities positioned in later stages of cultural evolution.

Speiser's temporal frameworks make their presence known in his photography through his specific framing of the physical reality of textiles in Vanuatu. Of the hundreds of images published in this ethnography fewer than 20 images contain textiles of Western fabric or Western styles. Of Speiser's images that do contain elements of Western influenced textiles they are merely captured within the frame of photographs which are meant to represent another object or event (See figure 35). In this photo of Speiser's labeled 'Dwelling house in Lelepa, Efate' we see the house with one man in directly in front of it wearing pants and other man in the front right corner wearing Western style pants and dress shirt. Nowhere in Speiser's publication do we find a photo of just a Ni-Vanuatu man or women wearing these types of clothes, rather they are always seen in a photo where the object of discussion is another piece of 'indigenous' material culture. We also cannot find any photos of the Western-fabric or Western-style clothing alone as is often seen in images of indigenous clothing, such as the nambas (See figure 36). During the period from 1912 to 1914 Western forms of clothing were fully incorporated into Ni-Vanuatu island culture, as can be ascertained from Lawrie's photos, which show Western fabrics in use on the islands of Vanautu and by Speiser's own comments on the harmful effects of this clothing. Speiser's own frameworks and aims of research prohibit him from seeing these textiles and representing them in his photographic work.
Conclusions

Speiser’s work remains significant in the study of Ni-Vanuatu textiles as it represents the first approach to material culture from these islands which was labeled as ‘scientific.’ In this discussion of photography, however, we have seen that although Speiser has made the utmost attempts to remain ‘objective’ or ‘impartial’ in his collection of ‘data,’ his interpretations are also greatly affected by his visual memory and mental framework. Even though he wants to use the camera as the objective eye which presents raw data to back up his claim, I think we have seen that these images are as much a construction of his own interpretations as any others. And like Hodges and missionaries such as Lawrie, Speiser creates images of Ni-Vanuatu textiles which become an important part of foreign impression of these islands. For example his photographic representations of textiles as clothing reveal his view of women as specific victims of colonization, through their loss of sexual freedom. Also for the first time we begin to see the emergence of the concept of Ni-Vanuatu men’s material creations as ‘art’ or meaningful forms and women’s creations as ‘craft’ or form valued only for their technically qualities. I think it is also in Speiser’s work that the theories of evolutionary progress are initially directly related to Ni-Vanuatu textiles. These images and interpretations of the fabrics are even more pervasive then those previously represented as they now take on the guise of ‘science,’ which in the Western world gives them an air of authenticity. Once again, however, I can find no interpretation or representation of the textiles as multi-dimensional in Speiser’s written or photographic text.

---

1 There were many alternative motivations for Australia passing this bill to exclude Pacific Islanders from the labor force. Avoiding violence towards islanders in their homelands was merely one expressed aim.

2 A condominium government exists when two colonial powers share the control of and rights to the same land. In this situation each participating government provides separate services to the communities.

3 Textiles in Vanuatu are used both as clothing and as ‘Mats’ to sleep on or to exchange and collect as sources of wealth.
Much of the information on how Speiser developed these six principle styles is only found in some of his German publications, which have not been translated to English.
Figure 21: Plate 43, Speiser

Figure 22: Plate 46 Figures 4 and 5, Speiser
Figure 23: Plate 2 Figure 1, Speiser

Figure 24: Plate 5 Figure 3, Speiser
Figure 25: Plate 4 Figure 5, Speiser

Figure 26: Plate 4 Figure 8, Speiser
Figure 27: Plate 8 Figure 2, Speiser

Figure 28: Plate 7 Figure 2, Speiser
Figure 29: Plate 90, Speiser

Figure 30: Plate 71, Speiser
Figure 31: Plate 49, Speiser

Figure 32: Plate 105 Figure 2, Speiser
Figure 33: Plate 74, Speiser

Figure 34: Plate 73, Speiser
Figure 35: Plate 18 Figure 1, Speiser

Figure 36: Plate 42 Figure 11, 12 and 13, Speiser
Chapter Four
Savages Images and Invisible Textiles;
The Photography of Martin and Osa Johnson
Introduction to Adventure Writers

Adventure writers represent a unique source of expression within larger Vanuatu colonial discourse. Their aims in travel and in their representation of the islands are specifically meant to appeal to a broader popular audience. This wide appeal differs greatly from the authors previously discussed within this text whose target audience is for the most part composed of exclusive groups of individuals with specialized interest in the islands. The writings of James Cook although somewhat widely read were primarily meant for an educated class of European men. Missionary reports and publications were aimed at other members of the same Christian denomination, already convinced of the worth of missionary work within the islands, while ethnographies such as Speiser's were clearly intended for other anthropologists. Within these groups of foreigners attempting to textually and visually represent Ni-Vanuatu communities and material culture, it is the adventure writer who reached the masses through lectures, films and exciting narratives with accompanying photos.

Adventure writing, however, does emerge from various preceding traditions found within diverse spheres of travel discourse. Voyaging tales of exploration were probably the first in this tradition. This lineage may also include some missionary stories often meant to engage the interests of members of their congregations or to amuse younger children, although, these works always had larger aims of education either in scientific or religious fields. The legacy of the adventure writer truly begins with the works of 'beachcombers' who become inadvertently or purposely engaged with island communities, some of whom become fully incorporated into island community life. Of the beachcombers who did return to their homes within foreign communities, some published texts retell their personal story of travel. For the first time these stories, based primarily on sensationalism, represented island communities for the pure entertainment of a popular audience. These works inspired
some individuals within Western communities to travel to foreign islands with the sole purpose of representing these islands within the literary genre. The islands of Vanuatu did not escape this form of representation.

Unfortunately, much adventure writing is often littered with stereotypes which today would be considered some of the most offensive forms of labeling. Two major themes are commonly referred to throughout this form of writing, the first being the seductive nature of the ‘South Seas.’ Within this theme island life is represented as being comprised of leisure time and sexual freedom. The seductive elements of island life are most commonly focused on writings representing the islands known as ‘Polynesian’ or Austronesian speaking communities. The second theme found in Pacific travel writing is that of the ‘savage’ nature of the islanders. This theme is particularly emphasized within writings on the island communities known as ‘Melanesian’ or non-Austronesian speaking islands and Fiji. Elements of violence, specifically cannibalism and head hunting, are emphasized in order to lead an air of danger to the adventurer’s tale (Rigby 1995, Introduction).

Within travel writing Vanuatu had began to develop an image as one of the most wild and dangerous areas. In 1838 missionary John Williams wrote a narrative of his experiences on Erromanga entitled Missionary Enterprises. Although his writing was not so very widely read within Western communities, his murder attracted a great deal of attention and gave the islands an aura of danger and brutality in the Western audience’s eyes. Years later Jack London included Vanuatu on his literary tour of the Pacific. The photographs from this voyage were actually taken by another young adventurer Martin Johnson, who later returned to the islands with his wife Osa in search of ‘savage’ lifestyles. Together the Johnsons published many popular books and films of these experiences in Vanuatu.
In this chapter I will focus on the photographic work of the Johnsons as an example of adventure photography because of the great influence their works had on wider Western communities. These photographs are primarily of interest within this discussion because of their mass appeal; however, they unfortunately pay very little attention to Ni-Vanuatu material culture. The lack of focus on objects and particularly their lack of attention to textiles does in some ways reveal their interpretations of island life and most significantly influences their visual representations of Vanuatu to large foreign communities. In the first section I will review the Johnsons’ published photos in order to determine their photographic aims and intentions which lead to their under-representation of textiles. In the last two sections I will move on to examine how their pre-formed concepts of gender and time influenced their interpretation of Ni-Vanuatu objects and their visual representations of these interpretations. Again, within this chapter there are very few images of material culture to investigate, but the Johnsons’ blindness to these visual works is in itself very telling of their perceptions of the islands.

Introduction to the Johnsons

The Johnsons not only represent the first literary authors to be discussed but for this text the first Americans. Martin Johnson was born in 1884 and grew up in the towns of Lincoln Center and Independence, Kansas. His Swedish father, John Johnson, ran a bookstore and later a jewelry shop, which he hoped his son would some day take over. But Martin also inherited his father’s mechanical sense and adventurous spirit which would lead him to travel the world in search of images of the ‘wild’ (Johnson 1940, 21). At only 11 years of age Martin first began to show an interest in photographic representation. It was at this time that his family’s jewelry shop in Independence began to sell Eastman Kodak cameras and supplies. Along with these shipments came photos of foreign lands as
examples of the camera’s performance. These photos enchanted Martin, and soon afterward his father built him his own darkroom, bought him photography books, and allow him to experiment with the supplies. From this time onward, Martin Johnson began to make money as a traveling portrait photographer, which financed his travels throughout America and Europe (Ibid, 23-24).

In 1906 Martin discovered that Jack and Charmian London were in the process of building their own ship, the Shark, to sail around the world in search of adventures to tell. He wrote to them expressing his interest and was soon invited to join them in the capacity of ship’s cook. Although his cooking skills were less then refined, he was able to make use of his great talent in photography. It was on this trip that he first encountered the island group of Vanuatu. When they landed on Tanna to spend a week, Osa later commented that he received his ‘first glimpse of real savages’ (Ibid, 57). Clearly an image of the islands as ‘wild’, ‘untamed’ or ‘uncivilized’ here began to form in his mind. Although photos from this trip are available and rather interesting, it proves impossible to determine whose frameworks are shaping the photos’ forms: Johnson’s or London’s. After this voyage he returned to Kansas where in 1910 he met Osa. They were married within a month.

Osa and Martin Johnson began a life of adventure writing and film-making with a particular focus on visually representing the islands to foreign communities. The trips they made together throughout their lives were funded by personal friends and later corporate sponsors, as were the lectures they gave upon their return, their movies and their books. As such the couple did have a vested interest in making their visual representations as marketable as possible, so they could continue their journeys to foreign lands. They first departed for adventure in the Pacific in 1917 with the money they had raised over the course of nine months with the help of friends and family. On this trip a short film and some still
photos were made of Ni-Vanuatu customs. In 1919 the Johnsons' once again returned to the islands of Vanuatu, this time with the comfort of the money they had made from the film, in order to provide a viewing of the film for the islanders and to capture many more still and moving images. The Johnsons published their experiences on this second trip in their first book *Cannibal Land*, which contains what they view as their most significant still photos.

**Review of Photography**

In this section I would like to review the published still photography of the Johnsons in order to reveal exactly what they were expecting to observe in the islands and what Martin Johnson was hoping visually to represent in his photos. These aims of their adventures clearly framed their interpretations of textiles and, in fact, in this case their aims made it almost impossible for them to even see the physical presence of textiles on the islands of Vanuatu.

The first trip made by Martin and Osa Johnson as a couple began in 1917. They did not necessarily intend to travel to Vanuatu but originally set out with the principle aim of making 'motion pictures' of a 'savage' lifestyle to show to a popular audience. They made their journey with very little money, catching rides on various types of ships. The Johnson's first hope of making their film was in a location in the Solomon Islands. Upon arrival in the Solomons, however, Martin decided that he wanted to save their limited supply of film to capture those 'savages completely untouched by civilization' (Johnson 1940, 112). He saw the Solomons as too 'tame' and under the control of the British authorities. At this point Martin made the choice to try to travel to Malekula island in the Vanuatu island group, as he had heard that because of the disputes between the French and British government over control of the islands, the islanders were left free to self rule. Martin was under the belief
that 'if a man in his savage state exists any place in the world, he existed here [in Malekula]' (Ibid, 113). From the traders and labor recruiters on whose ships the Johnson couple traveled, they heard that there were parts of this island never explored by foreigner. There were also rumors of cannibalism and head hunting. It was these violent images of the island that attracted photographic representations by the Johnsons. Clearly, their aim in these representations was to portray a particular vision of island life which would be consistent with a previously established image of violence and danger. This image would feed their concepts of the 'adventurous spirit' in travel among foreign lands.

During this first trip the Johnsons took few still photos but did make one short film of their arrival on Malekula, where they met the community leader of the 'Big Numbers' {Big Nambas} under somewhat hostile conditions and a perceived threat of violence. Upon their return to the U.S this film was titled Among the Cannibal Isles of the South Pacific and was release to the entire Western world. From this one film the Johnsons achieved great fame and financial rewards. The film was so successful that the Johnsons decided to travel yet again to the islands of Vanuatu in 1919 to make a more extensive film of the 'Big Numbers' community and also to show their first film to the islanders. This time the Johnsons traveled in style on the S.S. Pacifique with three accompanying ships and a party of four Western men and twenty-six island men (Ibid, 130). On this second trip many still photos were taken, first on the small island of Vao, where the Johnsons stayed while waiting for their ships and where they set up their developing lab. They then traveled to Northern Malekula to spend about 6 days in the village of the 'Big Numbers' where they made 150 plates and 200 Kodak films, which were soon taken back to the lab to preserve for the journey home to be developed. The photos which they published from this stay in their text Cannibal Land consisted of a few images of male islanders on the beach or in the bush, 4 male portraits, 1
image of island women and 2 images of the islanders watching the first film. They continued
taking still photos as they traveled around Malekula on the ship Amour. Next they landed on
the central part of the island, and interacted with a community whose name was not learned
and seemed to be nomadic. Although the Johnsons did make one note in their written text
on the difference found in the dress among members of the group, their full attention was
devoted to the appearance of the men. The men were likened in written word to monkeys,
and 2 portrait photos of them were published in the Johnson’s book (Ibid, 150). The Amour
then stopped on in Southwest Bay, where portraits were taken as well as a photo of a large
celebration and dances, although only the image of the dance was published in the couple’s
first book. The last landing on the Johnson’s tour around Malekula was on the island of
Tomman where they made a photo for publication of an island man preserving skulls. Their
final trip in Vanuatu was to the island of Espiritu Santo, where they photographed what they
believed were islanders participating in cannibalism. I say ‘believed’ as they did not clearly
see any cannibalism, but they saw a night feast in progress and upon later investigation made
a photo of the fire-pit with a skull inside (Ibid, 160). Surprisingly this images was not
published in Cannibal Land and only seems been used by the Johnsons in their second film;
Cannibals in the South Seas.

From the Johnsons’ choices in publication of their photos it seems that they did in
fact retain a very deliberate intention of representing the islands of Vanuatu as ‘savage’ in
lifestyle, enhancing the image of the dangerous, dark and even evil foreign lands. Particularly
in the published visual representations of the islands, the Johnsons’ aim is to construct this
treachurous image of Ni-Vanuatu communities. This construction is completed through the
inclusion of photos which focus on either A. the appearance of the islanders or B. the
actions of the islanders which the Johnsons see as evidence of a violent society. Again very

103
little material culture is represented and the two photos which reveal Ni-Vanuatu objects, do so only in aid of the Johnsons' greater aims. The physical appearance of the islanders is often focused on as a marker of the difference between the Western audience and the represented islander. This focus is based on old concepts of 'race' as being a physically, not culturally, distinct. The Johnsons interpret the islanders' appearances as intimidating, even terrifying, and therefore attempt to represent this visually in their photos. This focus can be seen in their attention to portrait photography. Although Osa reported that on their first trip to the islands they were equipped with one hand-cracked Universal motion picture camera, one 5 by 7 Graflex camera and one 4 by 5 Graflex camera, the cameras used on the second expedition are unknown. The 'chief' of the 'Big Numbers' Nagapate is photographed in a close-up shot, showing only his face, hair, shoulders and chest (See figure 37). The focal length is lengthened so the background is blurry, while Nagapate himself is well defined. The shallow depth of field and tight cropping allows the viewer to focus only on the islander's appearance, which Osa described as 'frightful' (Ibid, 120).

Again when the Johnsons were in Southwest Bay they paid particular attention to the 'elongated' heads of the islanders. Although in Cannibal Land, Martin does give a detailed description of the look of the islander's head, (Johnson 1921, 154) no photograph was published in this first text. There must have been, however, a particular importance placed on the photo taken at the time, as Osa later includes an image of a woman with this elongated head and a child undergoing the process to form his head in this manner (See figure 38). This image is also presented as a portrait showing the face and upper body of the women in detail, with the background out of focus, and the full body of the child. The focus here remains on the physical appearance of islanders. This sort of selective focus is also evident in the photos chosen to represent the Johnsons' experiences with the nomadic
community. The photos of this experience that they published in *Cannibal Land* are, once again, primary of the men’s physical appearances and were shot in the same manner previously used (See figure 39). The Johnsons portrait photographs reveal their own interpretation of the islander’s physical appearances as markers of difference for their Western audience. Clothing, textiles or any form of material culture might have also been seen as markers of difference, but with their presentation would come an image of the islanders as creative and productive individuals. If the Johnsons published photos of textiles a mental picture would be created within their audience of the island women peacefully and carefully constructing the detailed patterning, and an image of the men taking care in their delicate dressing. This image would conflict with the Johnson’s aim of projecting their adventurous nature in the face of danger.

This brings us to the Johnson’s second aim in their photography which was to depict the Ni-Vanuatu communities as an unstable threat. This aim was primarily achieved through the importance the Johnsons attached to the ‘action’ shot as they termed it (Johnson 1921, 77 and 83). The concept behind these types of photographs is not just to imply movement in a still image, but to portray a certain form of movement which might signal violence to a Western audience. The Johnsons do not photographically represent movement in work or even movement in leisure activities, but rather they represent movements which they interpreted as threatening. It is most important to them that these images of movements are ‘authentic.’ Naturally, images of this kind in *Cannibal Land* are a construct of the Johnsons’ framing, but they seem to desire only to portray those actions of the islanders that happen without their intervention. Traders and other travelers on the Johnson’s first trip to Vanuatu ‘couldn’t understand Martin’s not herding some of the more savage looking natives together, giving them trade stuff and ‘staging’ some scenes. It had been done, they said, but then as
always; Martin was a patient, persistent artist who would never be satisfied with anything but the truth' (Johnson 1940, 112). Martin Johnson himself was also known often brag to 'The few feet I had managed to grind out on Malekula were no 'Staged' pictures of savage life. They were real and convincing…' (Johnson 1921, 23). The authenticity of the action seemed very important to the Johnsons as they want to show the 'true' nature of island life. From their choice in published photos, however, it may be seen that the Johnsons wish to portray only those actions with they interpreted as violent. Therefore some of their most prized photo which were published in Cannibal Land were the photos of the large celebration and dance in Southwest Bay, where over 1000 insiders were present (Johnson 1940, 154). Martin even commented that he was 'crazy with excitement over the picture I was getting and I insisted on staying'. To the Johnson, the photo of the dance was a primary aim of the trip, as it depicted the aggressive nature of the islanders they had encountered (See figure 40). Unlike the portraits, this prized photo is taken from an apparently higher vantage point. This angle creates an image of the islanders, the slit gongs and the vegetation as melding into one cohesive form, which enhances the islanders association with the 'wild'.

Another one of the Johnson's 'best' photos which was published in their first book, was the image of an old man preserving skulls (See figure 41). The Johnsons were most pleased with these photos as they seemed to project an 'eerie' nature which increased their constructed image of the Vanuatu islands as a dark and dangerous space. Like the many aspects of island life left out of the Johnsons' photographs, the under-representation of material culture, especially of textiles created by women, would greatly contradict their aim in presenting a image of violent or dangerous actions being the predominate element of island life. As stated, if photos were published of Ni-Vanuatu textiles the peaceful and gentle
action that went into their creation would create an alternative image of island life as calm and productive.

Although there is very little mention of textiles within the Johnson’s written text for these very same reasons, one exception is made. In one passage of the Cannibal Land, Martin comments on the dress of an English plantation owner, and even suggests some meaning behind its appearance. He states ‘…now I see that a dinner coat is a symbol. It is a man’s declaration to himself and the world that he has a firm grasp on his self-respect...The Englishman must hold fast to an ordered existence or, in nine cases out of ten, the islands will ‘get’ him’ (Johnson 1921, 166). The dress coat is seen by Johnson as a marker of civilization or even the over-civilization of the English, in contrast with the ‘wild’ and ‘savage’ life of the islanders.

**Perceptions of Gender**

Like many of the foreign photographers that have been discussed, the Johnsons also saw women’s role in island community life as one of hardship. For the Johnsons these concepts of gender were wrapped up with their images of the ‘savage’ way of life. Therefore, they see the island women as continually abused and tortured by island men, as they perform hard manual labor, which the Johnsons are unaccustomed to witnessing. As such, there is little or no attention to the creative productions of women, as the couples’ perspectives can only allow them to see island women as objects themselves of the island men’s cruelty, and not as artistic producers. Again it is the under-representation of women’s textiles which may be seen as expressive of the Johnsons’ pre-formed concepts of gender.

It seems that within the Johnsons’ written text any discussion of Ni-Vanuatu women must focus on their low status within the community, often using aggressive descriptive words to convey the abuse the Johnsons interpreted them as having suffered. Osa comments
'Here, as is the case with nearly all primitive people, a woman does not count in the scheme of things except as a slave, to do the work of the village and bear the children, and this with kick and abuse for reward' (Johnson 1940, 134), while Martin describes the island women as 'poor, brow beaten wretches' and the island men as 'their lords and masters' (Johnson 1921, 78). Likewise the photographic representations of Ni-Vanuatu women included in the publication of Cannibal Land, focus not on their artistic or creative productions but rather on the Johnsons' perception of their ill-treated positions within the community.

In the entire photographic collection published in this first text only two images of women are seen. In one of these photos four island women are shown standing in a line facing the camera (See figure 42). Although these women are shown wearing very complicated textiles the attention of the audience is drawn through the caption to the gap in between the women’s front teeth, which really can only be clearly seen on the third woman from the right. Within the written text accompanying the photo Osa comments 'The married women, we observed, had no front teeth; their husbands had knocked them out, as part of the marriage ceremony' (Johnson 1940, 156), while Martin states of the same image 'The women of Tomman we found a trifle more independent than those of other island of the New Hebrides...The gap was the Tomman substitute for a wedding-ring. But on Tomman, as elsewhere in the New Hebrides, wives are slaves' (Johnson 1922, 159). Even though the textiles are captured within the frame of this photo the clear object of attention within the Johnsons’ framework is the missing tooth, which is represented in the written text as yet another symbol of the abuse of women and the general ‘savage’ nature of island life.

The very few discussions within the Johnsons’ written text and the small number of photographic representations of Ni-Vanuatu material culture reveal the Johnsons’ framing of all objects in terms of this concept of the ‘savage’ life. Even the island men’s creations,
which have most often been recognized as artistic in nature by foreigners, are not viewed by
the Johnsons as examples of creative talent, and the island women's artistic productions are
completely invisible to the Johnsons due to their own pre-existing frameworks of a 'savage'
world. Within the written text, boars' tusks are often mentioned in terms of their economic
value within the Ni-Vanuatu communities. At the same time there is never any mention of
women's mats as having a similar status of wealth attached to them. In fact the Johnsons
speak of the island men as gaining wealth through acquiring pig's tusks and by simply
'owning' wives. Again the Johnsons' focus is on women as objects of abuse and not creative
producers of valuable objects (Johnson 1921, 113 and Johnson 1940, 145).

Even objects which are produced by Ni-Vanuatu men are seen by the Johnsons
either in a very negative light, or to provide further evidence of the danger of the 'savage'
島 community. Of his experience at a celebration in Northern Malekula, Martin
commented 'A feast was being held to celebrate the completion of a devil-devil {slit gongs},
one of the crude, carved logs that are the only visible sign of religion among the savages'
(Johnson 1922, 110). Beyond this comment the Johnsons seem to make no other inquiries
as to the meanings of these works of art. The slit gongs are visually represented in a photo,
seemingly to add an ominous quality to the image, but again the focus seems to also be on
the appearance of the Ni-Vanuatu men of the village (See figure 43). In this case the
material culture is seen and represented by the Johnsons as providing a context for the
threatening appearance of the community leader, who is shown in the center of the frame
holding a piece of wood, which may strike the slit gong.

Some aspects of island material culture are classified by the Johnsons as true artistic
creations, but only when their images can be used by the Johnson to aid in the construction
of their vision of the islands as an ominous and dangerous locale. In fact the only point
where the Johnson do see objects are 'art' is when they witness the preservation of human skulls. Martin remarks 'the old head-curer was an artist, with an artist's pride in his work… {the skulls} are to be cherished in the family portrait gallery' (Johnson 1922, 157). The Johnsons also published in Cannibal Land one of their favorite photographs, which shows the elderly man performing these mortuary rites (See figure 41). This photo represents the Johnsons' only image of an object being created. It is very telling of their perceptions of Ni-Vanuatu objects, that the only creative production shown is that of persevered human heads. Clearly, the Johnsons see only those objects which are so vastly different then their own community's objects, and in fact probably can only recall for them a visual remembering of a horror show, as true art.

In comparing the Johnson's photos of Ni-Vanuatu men's material culture to their one photo of women's material culture there seems to be different perceptions and therefore distinctive visual representations. The representations of objects created by women do not directly portray an air of danger or violence, as did the photos of the man creating the skulls, but rather they seem to signal the Johnsons' interpretations of the low quality of the textiles as a marker of a women's low status. This visual representation of their perceived low status reveals the Johnsons' perception of the abusive nature of the island men (See figure 44). In this image the women are in a large group. Unlike some photos of island men they are not shown in the process of creating a dance or creating objects like the skulls; rather they seem to be pictured for just their appearance. This framing is also not similar in form to the photos that represent the men's appearances which are generally portraits; rather the women are shown grouped together on the ground to give a less individualized impression. Osa seated at the right provides a contrast to the island women with her clean clothing and very different posture. She sits with her head thrust outward into the space in front of her,
presumably to get closer to or see the Big Namba women more clearly, while the island women pull their heads in toward their own bodies. Difference in the exposure of the body is also captured in this photo. While the island women’s legs and chests are exposed, their heads are fully covered and they attempt to also conceal their faces. Osa, on the other hand, appears to have taken care to conceal her legs and chest but, although she wears a hat, her face and head are very well revealed. In this photo the textiles act to create for the island women a greater context of hardship in the eyes of the Johnsons. Of these women Martin states...

I have never seen human being more wretched than those women. At first sight they look like walking haystacks. They wore dresses of purple dyed grasses, consisting of a bushy skirt that hung from the waist to the knees, a sort of widow’s veil that was thrown over the head and face so as to leave a tiny peep hole for the wearer to look through and a long train that hung down the back almost to the ground. A more cumbersome and unsanitary dress was never devised. It was heavy. It was hot. Worst of all it was dirty. Every one of the dresses was matted with filth. I did not see a single pig- and there were dozens of them tooting about inside and outside the house- that was so dirty as the women of that village.

(Johnson 1922 77-78)

The Johnsons clearly interpreted these textiles as yet one more way in which the men of the islands mistreated the women. As such, the textiles themselves might have been seen by the Johnsons as a symbol of the low status of women and in the ‘savage’ island community, and thus this is the how the Johnsons could visually represent the textiles in their photography.

**Perceptions of Time**

The Johnsons’ perceptions of time clearly played a large role in their visions and representations of the islands, as can be seen in their continual references to the Ni-Vanuatu communities as ‘uncivilized’ or ‘primitive’, both terms which imply a placement along a timeline. Several themes relating to their concepts of time and space can be seen throughout their written work, such as the islands’ placement in the past or history of civilization and the
island communities' customs as representing the early stages of evolution. Unfortunately, it seems difficult to investigate these themes in the Johnsons' visual representations of their interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles as so few images of the textiles are seen, for reasons previously discussed.

The couple's professed interest in this journey was to see or observe 'life as it was lived in Europe in the 'stone age'' (Johnson 1921, 27). Implied in this aim is of course the preconception that the communities of Vanuatu have not progressed to the present which is occupied by Europe. In discussing the showing of his film, Martin makes a similar reference as he states 'Through my pictures of them, I had carried New York audience back into the Stone Age. Now I want to transport the savages into 1919' (Ibid, 94). Here the Johnsons are not only implying that the island communities are living in the past, but they are also suggesting that history may be viewed through their visual representations. The couple also makes use of Christian imagery of the historical past, being re-lived in the present in other geographical locations. Osa refers to Ni-Vanuatu women as 'poor daughters of Eve' and Martin comments that showing his film to islanders 'would almost be comparable to setting up a movie in the garden of Eden' (Ibid, 27). Once again the Johnsons see time as spatialized. In their view, crossing geographical distance becomes equal to traveling backward through time. For the Johnsons these concepts are mixed with ideas of the low status of island women as also representing a context found in the past. In the written text Martin relates a story of a young wife being punished for running away by having her legs bound together with a hot stone, which burned a hole in her flesh. Of this situation Martin comments 'I realize that it was not quite fair to judge these savages- still in the stage of development passed by our own ancestors hundreds of years ago- according to the standards of civilized society' (Johnson 1922, 109). These perceptions of the Johnsons become visual,
not only in the photo of the Big Namba women, but also in their photograph of four women on Tomma (See figure 42). The focus on the women’s missing teeth as reference the low status and abuse of women and also be seen to imply the communities placement by the Johnson as occupying an early stage in ‘development.’

Throughout the Johnsons’ written text there are also continual references to the concept of human evolution, or to Ni-Vanuatu men and women as representing an early stage in physical evaluation. This classification is most clearly seen in the Johnsons’ writings on the nomadic group of islands in the central area of Malekula. Martin reports that he found these islanders to be ‘nearer to monkeys than any humans being I have ever seen before or sense…an alert, nervous, monkey-like expression; quick, sure monkey-like movements’ (Johnson 1922, 131). These perceptions of the Johnsons can once again be seen mostly in their blindness to the delicate arts of the islands, and in their specific attention to physical appearances of the individuals.

Conclusions

Like most contemporary readers my first reactions to these travel writings of the Johnsons’ was one of complete outrage. Indeed, the Johnsons’ written and photographic texts were a major contributor to the foreign extremely stereotypical images of Ni-Vanuatu communities as ‘savage’; undeniably a truly ugly image. As I read the very personal writing of Martin and in particular Osa, however, I began to see that these written and photographic texts were not in fact created by two immoral individuals; rather they were constructed by the communities of which these individuals were a part. The Johnsons had merely adopted the mental and visual frameworks of their own American communities. It was these frameworks which created their interpretations of island life and textile, and hence created the photographic representation. These representations were inflicted on a large, popular
audience who in turn would continue to build upon them. The most predominant of these images is that of Ni-Vanuatu communities as different, dangerous and not artistically productive. As such, the incredibly complex and beautiful textiles from Vanuatu were long overlooked.
Figure 37: 'Nagapate', Martin Johnson

"Longhead" mother and child—New Hebrides

Figure 38: 'Longhead mother and child—New Hebrides', Martin Johnson
Figure 39: 'Wo-Bang-An-Ar', Martin Johnson

Figure 40: 'The Painted Dancers of Southwest Bay', Martin Johnson
Figure 41: 'The Old Head-Curer' Martin Johnson

Figure 42: 'Tomman Women, Showing Gap in Teeth', Martin Johnson
Figure 43: 'Nagapate Among the Devil-Devils', Martin Johnson

Figure 44: 'Women of the Big Numbers', Martin Johnson
Chapter Five
The Tourist Dollar, Development, and Depictions of Textiles;
The Photography of Tourism
Introduction to Tourism in Vanuatu

Images of life in Vanuatu and of Ni-Vanuatu material culture were soon more widely dispersed in a varied of media in order to encourage tourism to the islands. Throughout the Pacific the tourist dollar can produce a large economic impact in these small and often colonized nations. Photographs are a common device used to attract foreign tourists to a specific destination within the Pacific. For these photos to be effective, the authors and photographers must first ascertain what it is that tourists desire in a vacation locale and then present their destination in a manner which appeals to these requirements. Therefore, this exploration of images of textiles in tourism photography will present somewhat different issues than the photography previously discussed. One of the most obvious reasons for these differences is that with the previous forms of photography the photographers were using their own backgrounds and mental/visual frameworks to interpret the material culture of the islands and display this interpretation to the foreign public— in essence using photography to convince the foreign audiences of their own vision of island objects. While tourism photography, on the other hand, as it is more economically based, aspires to supply a product of leisure primarily in response to the romanticized demands of the Western world. The concept used in this form of photography is to anticipate what a tourist might be looking for in a vacation destination, then to use these desires to frame images of Vanuatu community life and material culture. Like the adventure photography of the Johnsons, tourism photography is very significant as it is so widely seen. Although tourism written and photography may appear to be less offensive than adventure literature like the Johnson, some of the very same theme can be found throughout as underlying concepts.

True mass tourism in Vanuatu, which for our purposes can be simply defined as travel out of one's community for sole intention entertainment and leisure, did not begin
until fairly recently in their history. As previously stated, during the period of the condominium British and French governmental offices were so concerned with their colonial experiment that many issues within the island communities were largely overlooked. The government offices spent so much time and effort making sure to provide two separate forms of currencies, two hospitals, two education systems, two resident commissioners, etc... that the Ni-Vanuatu communities developed for sometime without much influence from the Western nations, which included a lack of development of the tourist industry. The economic sector in Vanuatu was soon taken over by Australian companies, primarily Burns Philip Co., which did have a lasting impact on Vanuatu's culture of tourism (Douglas 1994, 43-44).

It was not until the 1930s that Vanuatu began to see an influx of tourism. This increase in tourism came with the contemporaneous growth of the cruise ship industry. While traveling aboard cruise ships, foreigners were able to witness Ni-Vanuatu island communities from the comfort and safety of their vessel. At this point, however, ocean travel was restricted to only the very wealthy. During World War II, the islands of Vanuatu saw many foreigners from all classes, as they were was utilized as a supply base for Allied troops. Many soldiers spent their leisure time here, and Vanuatu began to develop a true tourism economy, as small businesses run by islanders supplied the relaxing soldiers with goods and services (Ibid, 17-18). It was these men who after the war would return as tourists with their families to relive pleasant memories of their leisure time spent on these islands (Ibid, 192).

During the 1960s, the world began to open up to mass tourism, and as a condominium Vanuatu became available as a tourist destination to an even greater portion of foreign populations. Even in these early days of tourism the focus of advertising for
Vanuatu was on 'savagery' and 'primitiveness' (Ibid, 193-4). An image of the islands was being constructed as completely disconnected from the large world. In fact the advertising slogan used from 1970 up to 1990 was 'Vanuatu: the untouched paradise'. Although during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s the colonial government's attention became more focused on improving domestic and social services in preparation for impending independence, the preservation of indigenous practices was seen as advantageous in an economic sense as a large factor in maintaining a tourist industry.

This chapter will provide a discussion of tourism photography and its framing of Ni-Vanuatu textiles in the late 1970s, using the *Vanuatu* edition of the Les Éditions du Pacifique publications as a specific example. From the early 1970s to the mid 1980s tourism throughout the region of 'Melanesia' was on a decline due to political instability in other nations combined with the oil crisis which greatly impacted the cruise ship industry in the area. Unlike other 'Melanesian' nations such as PNG and the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu met this decline in tourism head on, and began steps to insure the income of the foreign tourist dollars. Some aspects of the tourist industry were even nationalized in order to hold this money within the country. It was in this climate of pursuit of the tourist dollar that *Vanuatu* was published in 1975, just five years prior to Independence. In this chapter I will first give a brief background of the author of the text, and of the photographer, in order to determine their shared aims. Next a review of the photography within the book will be explored as I attempt to understand how these images are being framed by the aims of the publication. And I will once again examine the themes of perceptions of gender and time of tourist culture as they are applicable to these photos.
Introduction to Bonnemasion and Hermann

This publication is unique in our discussion in many ways. First, the written text and the photography are by two different individuals: Joel Bonnemasion who constructed the written word and Bernard Hermann who provided the photographic images. Secondly, this text was produced as part of a series dedicated to exploring the cultures of the Pacific Islands. The aim of these publication is described on the back cover of each edition as giving foreigners who have not yet visited the islands a chance to discover these ‘enchanting spots’ and to provide a souvenir of the islands to those who have traveled in the region. The clear intention, however, in both written texts and images is to provide tourists with some background on the islands with the hope of enhancing the tourist industry in order to bring more foreign dollars into the country. As such, both the author and photographer were been commissioned by the publication to work towards this common aim.

The author of the text, Joel Bonnemasion was well known and respected throughout Vanuatu and famed in France as a social researcher. He was born in France on August 2nd, 1940 and trained as a cultural geographer. During his entire professional career, however, he paid particular attention to interdisciplinary methodologies. Bonnemasion’s research consisted of an exploration of issues surrounding migration, trading, cultural exchange and colonialism within the Pacific. He first traveled to the islands of Vanuatu in 1968 as a researcher for ORSTOM, Scientific Research Institute for Development in Cooperation. This French research organization focuses on investigating development and urbanization in the tropics. While living and working in Vanuatu, Bonnemasion soon became the organization’s director. During this time he also completed research for the Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique D’Outre Mer. Most of his field work was focused on the islands of Pentecost, Efate, Tanna and Ambae, where he twice took rank in grade society.
Bonnemasion is probably best known for his research on Tanna where he lived for two years from 1978 to 1980. From this research he published his seminal work *La Dernière Île* in 1986, which was later translated into English in 1994 as *The Tree and the Canoe*. Also in 1994 this author was appointed as a professor of cultural geography at the Sorbonne, University of Paris. Bonnemasion's most recent contribution to literature of Vanuatu was through his editing of a collection of essays entitled *Arts of Vanuatu* in 1996 (University of Hawaii Press). Tragically, Bonnemaison was recently killed while hiking in the mountains of New Caledonia with some of his students from the Sorbonne (Rodman 1998, 24-25). Bonnemasion's extensive background in the history of the islands makes his tourist writing all the more interesting, as he made very deliberate choices of which information to include in order to appeal to the tourist market.

The photographer for Vanuatu was a man by the name of Bernard Hermann. Although a great deal of information on his life and training has not been published, it is clear that he was a veteran of tourist photography. Hermann was born in Paris on October 11th, 1941. He first worked as a photojournalist for a French newspaper, later becoming a photographer for the Gamma Agency, a legendary French press agency. With this position Hermann traveled to the Amazon, Outer Mongolia and throughout the Pacific. In 1970 he arrived on assignment in Tahiti on the *Pen Duick IV* racing yacht. While in Tahiti he first began collaboration with *Les Éditions du Pacifique*. By the end of his career he had created the photography for this series in Tahiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Haiti, New Caledonia, and naturally Vanuatu. Hermann's other tourist works include photos for travel books about San Francisco, Rio, New York and Paris. Within the *Vanuatu* project, Hermann clearly provided the photographic and tourism expertise while Bonnemasion provided his
knowledge of Ni-Vanuatu communities. Through this discussion, however, it will become clear that both authors were working towards the same goal of enhancing the tourist market.

**Review of Photography**

Unlike the works discussed in previous chapters, the *Vanuatu* publication is primarily a photographic text. Therefore, it will prove important to make note not only of the context and framing of the photographs, but also of their specific layout within the text. As was the case within Speiser’s photographic collection, the organization of photos will be very telling in terms of how the images create an overall impression of the islands for potential tourists. This is also the first occasion discussed in this text where color is used in the photographic imaging of Ni-Vanuatu material culture. Clearly, the decision to include color photography in this publication was made in part to entice tourists to the islands, but also because color photos had become more available and much cheaper by the 1970s. Therefore, throughout this chapter, it will also be important to acknowledge how color is used in Hermann’s images.

In tourism studies such as Ngaire Douglas’ *They Came for Savages* we can receive a fairly clear idea of exactly what the tourists are looking for in a Melanesian vacation destination. Between Bonnemasion’s written text and Hermann’s photography it can be seen that not only their own frameworks but also their agenda of appealing to these desires of the tourist are clearly shaping their display of Ni-Vanuatu material culture. The majority of foreign tourists in the Pacific are searching for a location that will provide tropical environments, warm waters with good diving and beautiful beaches with palm trees. Most of the Pacific Islands can meet these first requirements, but the ‘adventure’ tourists are also looking for the ‘cultural’ experience or the witnessing of a community which they can imagine as vastly different than their own. As Douglas states of tourism with in these islands, “They {Ni-Vanuatu men and women} were always the attractions, being promoted as
"primitives", "stone-age savages" and "jungle warriors" even as they attained political independence' (Ibid, 228). Tourists had the clear notion that to visit Vanuatu was to see 'savage,' but not dangerous communities. These notions had been built upon from adventure writers' images such as the Johnsons' still photos, films and written narratives.

The colonial government of Vanuatu hoped to capitalize on the tourists' desire to see the 'exotic' communities, in order to provide more national income as independence neared. In fact, in the 1960s and 1970s the Chamber of Commerce made many attempts to include Ni-Vanuatu in the tourism market, by displaying individuals and cultural practices as attractions (Ibid, 211). Hence, it seems that Vanuatu made a conscious effort to display these forms of human attractions within its photographic layout. The cover of the book shows the face of a young Ni-Vanuatu boy in a close-up (See figure 45). He is decorated in 'traditional' Ni-Vanuatu style with brightly colored feathers and face-paint, hardly everyday wear. The background is dark and out of focus. In this darkness there is a sense of the island communities as ominous and maybe even potentially dangerous in their cultural practices, while the boy's face and dress remains the non-threatening focus. On the inside cover of the book, we find a similar attention to the Ni-Vanuatu communities and the individuals that comprise these community (See figure 46). Within this very initial image the viewer gets the sense of Ni-Vanuatu men aggressively running out of the bush, again in 'traditional,' 'indigenous' or not-everyday dress. The overall darkness combined with the brightly painted faces plays up the concept of the 'savage' lifestyle of the islands in the eyes of the potential tourist. If this cover is compared to the inside of Hermann's cover of the Les Editions du Pacifique's Tahiti edition, a difference in tourists' interests can be seen (See figure 47). On the inside of the Tahiti cover we see a picturesque seascape. The tropical blue green water and the deep blue sky is transected by a strip of lush green palm tree
growing along the beach. Four Tahitian men in matching tropical print shorts are shown on a beautiful white sail boat. Here the environment is the clear focus of attention and hence represents the perceived interests of tourists. The island seems to be romanticized as a tropical paradise for rest and relaxation, while the image on the inside of Vanuatu cover implies a perception of tourists’ interests in experiencing a ‘wild’ or ‘savage’ community. This focus on individuals or community life is common in advertisement for Ni-Vanuatu travel, as Douglas comments; ‘foreign tourism operators have long exploited the Melanesian cultures playing on the West’s rather morbid fascination for the primitive, the savage, the erotic and the exotic’ (Douglas 1994, 215). Because of this focus on Ni-Vanuatu peoples, island dress becomes much more important in photographic representations, as can be seen in the first two images represented in the Vanuatu text where ‘indigenous’ clothing is emphasized. ‘Traditional’ dress as a marker of the ‘exotic’, ‘wild’ or even ‘savage’ is a theme which can be observed at strategic points throughout the rest of this collection of photos.

At several points within Vanuatu, however, photographs of clothing are also presented in another manner to enhance concepts of urban centers as metropolitan locales. For example in the section entitled ‘Port Vila’ there is a great deal of attention paid to the ethnic diversity of the capital’s communities. In the written text Bonnemasion comments; ‘Port Vila: a multi-racial capital. The market place is a meeting ground for people of all ethnic origins’ (Bonnemaison 1975, 33). This quote is a caption shown with a photo of women wearing various styles of ‘traditional’ dress (See figure 48). In this case the clothing of the women of Vanuatu is used to demonstrate that the capital of the nation is in fact very urban and very cosmopolitan, as many ethnic style of dress are represented. This metropolitan image of communities within Vanuatu is not seen to conflict with the exotic image portrayed throughout the publication; rather it may reassure the potential tourist that
they can both enjoy views of a 'savage' lifestyle while still remaining within the comfort of an interesting cityscape.

This publication also provides a view of Ni-Vanuatu material culture as objects of Fine Art. There is in fact a small chapter simply titled 'the art,' which seem clearly aimed at encouraging tourists to purchase and collect Ni-Vanuatu artifacts. Bonnemasion's text is obviously over-simplified given his extensive background in the arts and history of the island group. The written explanations of objects' functions and meanings are reduced to bare bones in order to make them accessible to the tourist. Of the masks Bonnemasion comments that they "bare witness to an original art, closely allied to the rituals of secret societies and traditional festivities' and of the modeled skulls that they are 'directly related to ancestor worship' (Bonnemaison 1975, 39). This is where his descriptions of the meanings and functions end. Likewise within the photographic representation the objects in this section are shown within a village setting, but not in use (See figure 49). This framing both authenticates the objects' production for potential collectors while at the same time not making the object too complicated for the foreign viewer to enjoy. Within this section there is also a photographic representation of Ni-Vanuatu textiles framed in a similar manner, which I will later comment on in more detail in the section on perceptions of gender.

In sum, the photos of material culture within the Vanuatu publication are constructed to meet the desires of the tourist in order to increase the profitability of the tourism industry in a nation on the brink of independence. Within this larger goal textiles are viewed as dress which may mark the 'savage' nature of the communities, which is a primary reason for travel to the islands. Dress is also used mark ethnic diversity in the urban center of Port Vila. Finally, the photos frame Ni-Vanuatu material culture as authentic forms of collectable art.
Tourism Perceptions of Gender

Naturally tourists who travel to Vanuatu will bring with them varying perceptions of how gender should look based on their home community's gendered norms. There can be, however, a shared expectation of Ni-Vanuatu gender roles. Within Bonnemasion's text there are very few references to gender whatsoever. This gap in information, of which Bonnemasion would clearly have knowledge, may be due to the publication's aim of appealing to tourists from a variety of backgrounds, presumably with varying ideas of gender roles. Within the photographic representation, however, an interesting perception of Ni-Vanuatu gender and dress appears.

In the content and organization of Hermann's photos, clothing seems to function as a marker of gendered participation in urbanization and the government. Through dress men are portrayed as active in the government, while women seem to demonstrate their more domestic roles. For example in the section entitled 'Port Vila' two comparable images of city life are represented on facing pages. The first photo shows a Ni-Vanuatu man leaving a city shop in a government uniform (See figure 50). The man's body, face and in particular his uniform are all clearly visible. He is actively stepping forward into the sunlight, with his hands swing freely at his sides; offering an official air. The Western style shorts, shirt and cap lead the tourist view to see the city as a space not so different from their own community. The image of the uniform may even be reassuring to the tourist as the government is clearly active within the city. If we compare this photo to the photo on the facing page a clear difference may be seen in representations of gender (See figure 51). Here the tourist will see a Tonkinese woman in 'traditional' dress. The woman is shown leaving a building, carrying food and bundles of other goods. Her face is turned back into the darkness and she appears more stationary. It seems as though she is meant to appear in the
process of completing the domestic labor of shopping. The large 'traditional' Tonkinese hat
she wears is conspicuous and even noted in the text as 'An unusual sight.' Although it is
uncommon, it was chosen to be photographically represented as it portrays an image of
women living in Port-Vila as domestic, 'traditional' and possibly even passive. Through the
comparison of these two photographs, which significantly are shown together, we see that
through their clothing men in the urban communities of Vanuatu are presented to tourists as
active, official government leaders, offering a strong presence of safety in the big city. While
women's clothing in Vanuatu is portrayed to the potential tourists as traditional and
domestic; an image which will safely not conflict with most Western notions of women's
roles in the community. Furthermore, both of these photos reveal the strong Chinese
presence in Vanuatu, which once again highlights the capital's cosmopolitan nature.

Within the section labeled 'Toward Independence' a similar portrayal of the themes
of gender and dress may be seen within Hermann's photos. This chapter describes the steps
recently taken by both Ni-Vanuatu and the two colonial governments to secure an
independent state. Through their clothing men are represented as active governmental
officials while women's clothing represents their placement within the domestic sphere. The
first two photos are of Ni-Vanuatu men dressed in crisp, white, Western style uniforms (See
figure 52). In one image a man is shown in this style of uniform, with metals across his
chest, raising the flag. Eight more men dressed in identical uniforms are directly behind him
in formation. The sense here is of a well-organized government preparing to move into
independence. The photo of a woman on the very next page portrays a domestic and
traditional sense (See figure 53). Once again the woman, although in a paid-labor,
government position, is performing a domestic task, this time sweeping. Her 'Western style'
clothing is an exact copy of the form introduced by the Anglican missionaries over 100 years
ago. She is wearing a knee length, tropical print skirt, a loose fitting blouse and sandals. Although she is working in a government office, she wears no uniform and does not seem to be active in official duties. Again the portrayal of domestic Ni-Vanuatu women is surprising considering their great involvement in the fight for independence. It seems that through dress a visual representation of gender in Vanuatu is being presented which will not conflict with the tourist’s preformed notions of how gender should look.

Textiles are also visually represented within the Bonnemasion/ Hermann text as objects of artistic interests. It is, however, only those textiles labeled ‘traditional’ which are presented in this manner. Once again, the text and to some extent the photos seem to portray a blindness to the gender of the object’s creator. No mention of gender is made in the text describing the construction of the objects, and in the one photographic representation of a textile, a man is shown seated on one end of a mat, as though he is its creator (See figure 54). On closer inspection, however, it may be seen that concepts of gender filter into the interpretations of material culture presented in the text and in the photos. These concepts seem to continue in the vein of viewing men’s creations as ‘fine art’ and women creations as ‘craft.’

In the written description of the arts Bonnemasion comments that ‘by far the most spectacular objects are the enormous carved wooden drums from Ambrym’ (Bonnemaison, 39). He clearly understands that tourists would see large, wooden objects, which are created by men as the most significant works of art. He also recommends collectable objects which are ‘authentic’ through his comments that ‘the wooden staffs carried by some tribal chiefs and traditional weapons, plus numerous objects sculpted from fern trunks, are also genuine collectors’ items’ (Bonnemasion 1975, 41). As was seen in the photographic and written work of Speiser, art is determined by the objects’ association with social or religious meaning,
while a lower form of creation or craft is simply functional in a social context, with no
deeper meaning held in the object formal attributes. The tradition of these divisions is
carried into Bonnemasion's text and Hermann's photographs, which are aimed to engage the
tourist's interests. Bonnemasion's intention is clearly to reveal to the tourist the 'art' of Ni-
Vanuatu men, and to encourage their sale which is not his objective in his descriptions of
women's mats.

By contrast the written description of the mats focuses on material identification
and their economic value with no reference to artistic value or the complexity of their
construction. Bonnemasion simply notes that 'The mats which are made on islands of
Pentecost and Aoba are woven with fibers of pandanus leaves. Their red motifs are printed
with a block carved from the trunk of a banana plant. These mats are used for barter for
ritual transactions' (Bonnemasion 1975, 41). It is possible that Bonnemasion anticipates the
tourist's view of the mats as a lower craft, which therefore will not fetch as high a prize as
men's creations, and thus focuses his attentions on promoting the sellable works. Even
within the photography, we see that although a mat is represented it is shown not with a
women who would have been the logical choice as it producer but with a young man in
‘traditional’ dress (See figure 54). Perhaps the textile is visually framed in this way in order
to give some small air of the authentic nature of the mat as a craft prized even by the men of
the community.

Within this publication it is clear that gender does play a role in the interpretation
and representation of textiles, although this role is often not directly articulated. Tourists are
here presented with an image of women's roles as traditional and domestic through the
visual representation of women in conservative clothing. Ni-Vanuatu men on the other
hand are presented as reassuring government leaders represented by their familiar types of
uniforms. Finally, concepts of gender are once again transferred onto material culture, clearly placing women's textiles within the realm of 'craft.'

**Perceptions of Time**

Throughout our discussion of perceptions of time thus far, most of the authors and photographers have directly represented their ideas of spatializing time so they interpret themselves as moving from the present, located in their home communities, backwards in time to the past, located in Ni-Vanuatu communities. As such, in the majority of cases Ni-Vanuatu textiles directly mark this temporal space. In tourist writing in the 1970s, however, ideas of time and Ni-Vanuatu communities became less directly expressed but still underline many assumptions. Much of the focus in Bonnemasion's text is on issues of progress and development, which clearly reflects his background at ORSTOM. The concept of 'Development' with which he is working, is based on the very concepts of time and space discussed in the previous chapters. The notion of 'Development' implies that a community will move from simple historical achievements to more complex accomplishments over the course of the passage of time. In essence, however, the final point of this timeline of 'Development' is the 'Western' or home community's achievements. Therefore, the mere presence of the concept of 'Development' signals an assumption that the passage of time will inevitably lead a community located in the past or with 'simplistic' historical achievements to the present or the 'Modern' Western world, with achievements perceived as more 'complex'. In tourism writing on Vanuatu the author and photographer must strike a careful balance between the image of the islands as a 'Developed' nation which can provide tourists with the comfort and safety to which they are accustomed and the images of romanticized 'savage' or 'stone-age' communities which have become the major tourist attraction. Within the *Vanuatu* publication the development of the islands is given attention.
but only as it can be balanced with the ‘wild’ images of small rural communities which are
doomed to extinction through the progression of time. In this context Ni-Vanuatu textiles
are framed as a marker of this romanticized image of the ancient and rare rural island
communities.

These concepts become most clear within the section of the text labeled ‘Malikolo.’
Initially, the town around the plantation of Norsup is described by Bonnemasion as ‘this vast
and modern plantation… considered to be one of the most important economic
developments of the entire archipelago.’ He continues to create an image of ‘development’
when he states that ‘a small village is evolving on the outskirts of the Norsup plantation’
(Bonnemasion 1975, 74). In his use of the word ‘developments’ and ‘evolving’ we can see
that there is a clear connection to the passage of time in the islands bringing historical
achievement likened to those the tourists are used to seeing at home. Significantly in the text
of the same page, Bonnemasion balances this image of Development or Modernity with a
description of a village interpreted as located in the past.

In the interior of the island, living quite apart from the modern world which they
observe in awed silence, live the tribes known as the Big Nambas and the small
Nambas, they constitute another face of Malikolo- a rather tragic one, hidden away
from the rest of civilization.’

(Bonnemasion 1975, 74)

Here again in Bonnemasion’s text we see an image of the Big Nambas community as not a
part of the ‘modern’ world. This term does seem to be popularly used in the 1970s, but it
still carries with it the implications that some Ni-Vanuatu communities are not located in the
present but represent the past. Bonnemasion further elaborates on this perception of time
as he explains that ‘apart from their tribal feuds, the daily life of these Big Nambas remains
almost untouched by the twentieth century’ (Bonnemasion 1975, 78).
In the photography representing the island of Malikolo we see that Hermann is attempting to strike a similar balance as that found in the written text. On the first page which discusses Norsup, we find two diverse images. The first photo shows a small airplane taking off from Norsup (See figure 55). The airplane represents a Western historical achievement now located in Vanuatu, in other word; the ‘modern world’ or the present can be found on this island for the tourist’s comfort and convenience. This image is then balanced with the image of a Big Nambas woman in her indigenous dress (See figure 56); a portrayal which is similar in construction to that of the Johnsons. The background is one again dark and blurred; the woman’s face enclosed by the traditional headdress of the Big Nambas becomes the focus of attention. This textile therefore becomes framed with the notion of aspects of the island communities which are ‘sheltered from the process of evolution,’ meaning they are located in the past (Ibid, 80).

The idea of time is dealt with somewhat differently within works aimed at tourists, such as the Les Editions du Pacifique publications. Here, it is just as important to reveal to the tourists that there are many aspects of Ni-Vanuatu communities which are located in the present as it is to advertise the ‘ancient’ traditions which are representative of rare, dying communities. Photographs of Ni-Vanuatu textiles are used in this context to enhance the tourist’s perception of some communities being held within their historical traditions.

Conclusions

As opposed to the previous chapter on the adventure representations of the Johnsons, the images created in this tourist booklet depicts views with which we are all familiar. In works which are meant to entice tourists we do in fact expect to see the community framed in a certain manner which would be appealing to foreigners. But for me the surprising aspect of this booklet of tourism images from Vanuatu is the effect that this
framing has on material culture. Indeed, unlike Hermann’s photos of communities in America or Europe, these photos seem to overlook the great creative and artistic productions of the islands in favor of enhancing the tourists’ desire to see human attractions labeled as ‘wild’ or ‘uncivilized.’ And once again, the textile creations of women seem to be the most disregarded. As clothing, however, Ni-Vanuatu textiles are framed in this publication to both increase the impression of the human attractions as ‘savage,’ while also assuring the tourist of the well-placed urban environments which will provide them with safety and comfort.

1 I here place the term traditional in quotations because, although these textiles do have a longer tradition in the islands of Vanuatu, Western style of dress at this point has been present in the communities for about 150 years. As such, these forms of dress may themselves be seen as ‘traditional.’
Figure 45: Cover of Vanuatu, Hermann

Figure 46: Inside Cover of Vanuatu, Hermann
Figure 47: Inside Cover of *Tahiti*, Hermann

Figure 48: Port Vila Market, Hermann
Figure 49: Mask of South Malikolo, Hermann
Figure 50: Man leaving Port Vila Shop, Hermann

Figure 51: Tonkinese Woman leaving Port Vila Building, Hermann
Figure 52: Man Raising Flag in 'Toward Independence', Hermann

Figure 53: Women Sweeping in 'Toward Independence', Hermann
Figure 56: Big Nambas Woman in 'Norsup', Hermann
Chapter Six
The Re-Valuing of Women's Contributions;
The Photography of Lissant Bolton
Introduction to Contemporary Anthropology in Vanuatu

Like many fields within Western academia, anthropology possesses a history of the under-representation of women scholars. Although many women working within the Western tradition have completed research and even writing on foreign communities, their presences in the discipline of anthropology has until recently been minimal. In the past this lack of recognition of women's scholarship has led to a deficiency in attention paid to particular issues, knowledges, practices and physical creations which are directly related to women of the studied community. Because most early anthropologists were men there was a natural tendency to focus on the male members of the studied communities, which often resulted in the under-valuing of the female members' contributions. When women began to enter the field of Western anthropology in major numbers, it was first necessary to re-examine past research in order to ascertain precisely where information on women's aspects of the community were lacking. As we have seen in the examples discussed here, Vanuatu proved to be no exception as to women's contributions; in this case, their material contributions of textiles were largely viewed as simply 'craft,' and their political, social, emotional and spiritual value was widely ignored.

Until relatively recently official anthropological research within Vanuatu was male-dominated. The very earliest scholars of Ni-Vanuatu communities were indeed all men, with Codrington and Speiser setting a foundation upon which other Western men would build. Their research was followed by William Halse Rivers, who published a text in 1914 which addressed the systems social organization found throughout the region of Melanesia. At this time these systems were viewed by Western scholars as the sole concern of community men. The next generation of Western male anthropologists to research in Vanuatu included
Bernard Deacon and John Layard. Surprisingly, both men had problems with the publication of their research. Deacon tragically died in 1927 prior to publication of his research, however, his notes were complied and published by Camilla Wedgewood in 1934. Layard’s publication was delayed due to illness, but his text finally appeared in 1942. Both of these men were interested in the N-Vanuatu male ‘grade societies’ and ritual cycles on Malakula, and thus Vanuatu achieved some fame within Western anthropological circles as the location of complex male-based achievement systems. A student of River’s, T.T Barnard also completed research in Vanuatu but never published it. In the 1950s male scholars continued to dominate the discipline of anthropological research in Vanuatu. Specifically, French anthropologist Jean Guiart, who like Bonnemaison began his research under ORSTOM, published works focusing on the male aspects of the islands’ political systems. Scholar Michael Allen also researched in Vanuatu on the island of Ambae for a doctoral dissertation at Australian National University in 1964. Although Allen never published this work, he did direct his students at Sydney University in further research in the islands. This research was then complied and edited by Allen in a publication entitled Vanuatu: Politics, Economics and Ritual in Island Melanesia, which was concerned with political process, leadership, ‘graded societies’, hereditary systems and the colonial government. As can be seen within this review most Western anthropological research taken place within Vanuatu became concerned with the leadership systems of Ni-Vanuatu men. Titles in the vein of Stone Men of Malakula: Vao (Layard 1942) or Grands et Petits Hommes de la Montagne, Espiritu Snato (Guiart 1956) were common. As such, those wooden, craved sculptures which were created by men in the process of achieving a ‘grade’ became the only art which anthropologists viewed as notable.
Unfortunately, as women soon gained a greater presence in Western anthropology throughout the 1970s, the government of Vanuatu placed a moratorium on research in the early 1980s just after independence had been realized. This ban on ‘outside’ or Western researchers within Vanuatu was due to rising concerns that kastom is the sole property of Ni-Vanuatu communities and was not being respected by researchers (Regenvanu 1999). It could be said that these bans took place at an inopportune time in terms of Western anthropology, as female scholars had began to re-evaluate the past research of their male colleagues and were hoping to look to those communities which had been represented with a focus on the female perspectives and contributions.

Although this moratorium was fairly strict, a few women anthropologists were able to gain access. For example, Margaret Rodman carried out some research as W.L. Rodman worked on his research for an article which would be titled ‘Men of Influence, Men of Rank,’ once again focusing on the famed male ‘graded societies.’ M. Rodman, however, published a full monograph which was released in 1987, concerning land tenure in the islands and did give more specialized attention to issues of gender. It was, however, the research and scholarship of Margaret Jolly that focused attention on gender concerns within the nation of Vanuatu. Just after independence Jolly began to write on island politics, particularly concentrating on gendered relationships within various Ni-Vanuatu communities. Soon her work took on a directly feminist approach in such works as ‘The Politics of Difference: Feminism, Colonialism and Decolonization in Vanuatu,’ which lead to her seminal work Women of the Place: Kastom, Colonialism and Gender in Vanuatu which was published in 1994. Another female scholar recently researching in the area is Annie Walker, a French anthropologist and enthnobotanist. Walker’s primary interest is in textiles, and she has produced many essays which solely focus on the complexities of production and use of
textiles on the island of Pentecost. The focus of this chapter, however, will be the photographic work of Lissant Bolton, whose predominant focus is on the social significance of Ni-Vanuatu women's textiles within the larger community context.

These female scholars have demonstrated that within the field of anthropological research and writing, the greater participation of women academics has led to a more explicit focus on women's interactions within the island communities, which in turn has led to an increased attention and valuing of women's material contributions of textiles. Within this chapter I would like to explore the photographic work of Bolton, in order to investigate how her interpretations of the Ni-Vanuatu textiles are represented. As in the previous chapters, I will continue to investigate themes of gender and time as they influence Bolton's interpretations. There will be, however, an additional component to this particular chapter as there are also published photographs by Ni-Vanuatu women of the very same event that was attended and imaged by Bolton. These photos will form an interesting comparison to those of Bolton and will hopefully solidify, through their dissimilarity to Bolton's framing, the concept that photographs of Ni-Vanuatu textiles do in fact represent the interpretations of the photographer not the intrinsic meaning of the textiles themselves. Yet it must be noted that the photographs published by Ni-Vanuatu women also do not represent the 'true' intrinsic meaning or reality of the textiles, but again represent only the interpretation of particular Ni-Vanuatu women, who also hold their own specific aims and backgrounds which frame their own interpretations and representations.

**Background of Lissant Bolton's Projects**

Lissant Bolton has contributed to both Western scholarship on Vanuatu and directly to Ni-Vanuatu communities through a wide variety of approaches. Her contributions began as she was appointed to the position of Pacific Collections Manager at
the Australian Museum in 1979. She held this position for a decade, during which she became enchanted with the objects held in the museum's large collection of material culture from 'Melanesia.' Although Bolton has remarked that she was personally drawn to these objects, she also came face to face with questions of the relationships between objects and their meanings, the classifications of art, and the holding of indigenous property within museum collections (Bolton 2003, XVIII). As she was dealing with these queries herself, she was invited to set up a collection cataloguing system and to train staff members for the Vanuatu Cultural Center, which began her close and lengthy connection with this institution.

In 1991 Bolton continued her association with the VCC as she volunteered to train a coordinator of a new project entitled the Women's Culture Project, which aimed to assert the idea that Ni-Vanuatu women also had valuable knowledge based in indigenous traditions, known as kastom. Up to this point within Vanuatu, kastom had been viewed as relating only to men's knowledge. In order to engage in altering this national ideology, Bolton was also asked to start the first Women's Culture Project program entitled the Ambae Project which focused on Ambaean women's skills and understanding of plaited pandanus textiles. Thus Bolton has used these experiences with the Ambae Project to form her research for many publications. Her seminal work, however, was not published until 2003 and was titled Unfolding the Moon; Enacting Women's Kastom in Vanuatu. Although this work represents Bolton's most extensive written piece, in this chapter I would like to discuss her article 'Tahigogona's Sisters: Women, Mats and Landscape' as it seems to be the most pictorial of her work, where the photographs play a large role in the text. This article was published in Arts of Vanuatu in 1996, within the chapter: 'Men's Art, Women's Art.' The research for this article took place from July 1991 to August 1992, during the time Bolton worked on the Ambae Project.
**Review of Photography**

In reviewing the photography of Bolton's 1996 article, it will prove important to remember that while observing these Ni-Vanuatu textiles, she was working with the directly expressed purpose of the *Ambae Project* to alter the national ideology which held that men were the sole custodians of kastom. She was also working within the field of anthropology which had long overlooked the textiles' worth. In effect these contexts created a double statement attesting to the textiles' insignificance, which Bolton had to write against. Her agenda in Vanuatu was clear: to establish the value of textiles as Ni-Vanuatu women's contribution to kastom, while also justifying their inclusion in Western anthropological discourse.

As a collection manger at the Australian Museum, Bolton did have some experience with photography of Pacific Island material culture. She was involved as a junior partner in a project in which photos of objects within the museum's collection were taken back to the place of the object's origin, in order to gather further information on their creation. Through this experience Bolton claims to have gained a better understanding of the importance of meanings socially assigned to the objects, as she states 'Returned to their place of origin as photographs, objects fall into different relations with each other' (Bolton 2003, XX). The result seems to be that Bolton began to view photos as though they were an objective perception of objects in the collection and moreover as though they signified the original meaning assigned to the object by its original community. The original meaning of the object is therefore transposed on to the photograph. In her own article on Ni-Vanuatu textiles, Bolton uses photography to present what she sees as the raw data of the objects. This data which Bolton sees as objective and reality includes both the formal make-up of the plaited mats and the material's social significance within the community.
The expressed aim of Bolton's article is to describe connections between land, settlement, inter-village relationships and women's creation of mats in Ambae. She begins by retelling Ni-Vanuatu myths including the creation story of Ambae which describes the general topographical layout of the island and the story of Tahigogona. She recounts that Tahigogona had nine sisters, who were given nine pandanus leaves and traveled with them across the island, settling in various locations. Where these sisters settled they created mats. Current communities on Ambae represent the matrilineal descendents of these sisters. Through these myths Bolton establishes the original connection between land, movement, women, and mats. She then continues in the section titled simply ‘Ambae mats’ to describe the different uses of mats in contemporary Ambae such as clothing, sleep furnishings, exchange items and status symbols. In the same section Bolton presents more data concerning the complex construction of diverse types of mats, whose defining characteristics are found in the plaited designs as opposed to the dyed patterns. She then details the elements of both the plaiting configuration and the dying process. The next section called ‘Mats and the social landscape of Ambae’ concerns additional information on social assignment of individuals' identity on the island as the land is passed on patrilineally, while family affiliation is past matrilineally. Bolton also here describes particular mat types as they can be traced to a specific geographical location where they were first created. Finally, Bolton presents her own conclusions in the last section; 'Mat, women and landscape.' The history of a particular mat type known as singo marha is told in order to ‘illustrate both the control held by women over the innovation of mat types, and the ways in which women carry knowledge and skill about mats around the island’ (Bolton 1996, 118-119). Through this text Bolton makes clear her interpretation of the textiles as firstly exceedingly complex in construction, which speaks to the great skills of the island women, and secondly as
immensely significant in community life through their multiple functions, which attests to the importance of women as possessors of kastom in their own right.

Throughout this article Bolton uses her own photographs in a manner based on her experience of museum photography where the photo can directly stand in place of the object; to present raw data or to illustrate the facts she claims. She does not present the photos as representative of her own interpretations or the conclusions she asserts in her written text. In fact, of the six photos used in this article five are located in the first section of the text in which she describes the objective facts of textiles. The last photo is found in the second section where further descriptions are made. To function as supplementary descriptions, Bolton uses three different types of framing in her photos of the textiles.

The first type of photo is used by Bolton to display formal elements of the textiles, which attests to Ni-Vanuatu women's skills in plaiting design and dyeing patterns. The first image in the article is of this type. It shows a single mat lying vertically and very flat on a completely black background (See figure 57). The black of this background shows through the open-work at either end of the mat, which accentuates the delicate and detailed nature of the weave through the contrast of the light yellow on black. The fringes are also lying at either end of the mat. Both the intricacy of the plaiting and the precision of the dyed patterns are well displayed. From the caption we learn that this type of mat is a gwana with a dyed vule or moon pattern and it was worn by women. This particular mat was collected by Speiser and is now held in the Museum fur Volkerkunde, Basel. The second photograph of this type is the third image in the article (See figure 58). Its framing is identical to the first. This mat, however, is the singo tuvegi mat type, with a different plaited design and a different dyed pattern. Again this mat was also collected by Speiser and is held in his collection. Like the first image, this mat is referenced in the text in order to illustrate
Bolton’s description of the physical attributes of the mat type. This type of framing is most similar to that of Speiser, as the frame is kept consistent in order to highlight the formal differences of the textiles. The final image in the article is also framed in a similar manner (See figure 59). The photo is meant to represent a mataitalai plaiting technique, specifically one from the Speiser collection. This time the mat is lying flat on a white background. The photo is a close up of the corner of the mat including the open-work and fringes. Bolton’s use of this sort of close-up view is intended to contribute to the descriptive element of mat types within her written text, which reveals her stress on technical variation and the difficulty of textiles production.

The second type of photographic representation Bolton uses in this article similarly functions to portray the difficulty of complex plaiting, but this time more directly demonstrates the skills of the female creators. Of this type of photo there is only one image (See figure 60). In this image Bolton displays the process of creation of a singo mat by Margaret Solomon, a Ni-Vanuatu woman. In particular, we see dried pandanus leaves being plaiting into an un-dyed mat. Unlike the first type of photo, in this image only a small portion of the plaiting is shown, with the background out of focus. Solomon’s hands are also included in the frame as she holds and plaits the leaves. Because this is a detailed, close framing of the mat and because of the inclusion of the hands, it can be assumed that Bolton wishes directly to display the skill needed in the creation of textiles, which once again reveals her interpretation of the mats as representative of the vast knowledge and ability of Ni-Vanuatu female creators.

In the third and final category of photographic image, Bolton displays her interpretation of the social significance of the functions of the textiles. The second image in the article belongs to this category of framing (See figure 61). In this photo Ni-Vanuatu
women are shown dancing, dressed in plaited pandanus textiles. Nine to ten women are shown singing, and form a circle in the foreground and the middle of frame. Just behind these women there are several community members dressed in shorts, T-shirts and dresses, who seem to be watching the dance. In the very background we see one small building. This photo portrays Bolton’s interpretation of the textiles as they function as ‘traditional’ clothing used in ceremonial contexts. The second photo which fits within this final category is the fourth image in the article (See figure 62). Here Bolton shows Ni-Vanuatu women presenting mats at an exchange which marks a marriage. A large pile of colorful textiles lies diagonally in the frame of the photo. The pile is place on the ground; women and children gather around them. Two women are in the process of unfolding and lifting one mat on to the pile. The framing and inclusion of this photo demonstrates Bolton’s interpretation of the textiles as a vital aspect of exchange in Ni-Vanuatu communities.

These three categories of photos reveal how Bolton herself sees the textiles; all display the importance of the mats through the complexity of their technical elements and through the significance of their functions in social life. If we compare Bolton’s framing of the textiles in her photography to that of Ni-Vanuatu women’s photographs taken during the same time, some interesting difference emerge. In all of Bolton’s images the mats are the central focus. This is clearly true of the first two categories of photos, where only the mat is seen in the frame. But it also may be true of the final category where women are also a central element in the composition, as the mats can be seen in detail and the women provide the context in which the mats are photographed. Significantly, in the Ni-Vanuatu photos the focus of the images is more directly on the women who created the mats (See figures 63 and 64). The images chosen to be included in a publication by the Ni-Vanuatu women focuses not on the general significance of the textiles, but rather focuses on particular
women’s significance in the production of the textiles, as each woman proudly displays her own creation.

Also through a comparison of these images, Bolton’s interpretations of the textiles as women’s kastom become clear. In the Ni-Vanuatu publication many photos represent the preparation for the event of textiles exchange (See figure 65). In one photo, for example, community women are seen sitting in their workshop, organizing the event. In Bolton’s photos only the parts of the ceremony in which ‘traditional’ textiles are displayed in a ‘traditional’ content, such as dance or exchange, are included. This framing relates the currently used mats directly to older Ni-Vanuatu traditions and reveals Bolton’s interpretation of the textiles as the female component of kastom.

**Perceptions of Gender**

Unlike some of the photographers previously discussed, the concepts of gender that influence Bolton’s photographic work come not from solely from her home community, but also were constructed through her work with the *Women’s Culture Project* in Vanuatu. Within the Western discourse of anthropology and art history women have not been viewed or represented as creative members of communities. Their creations have been vastly overlooked by the academy and deemed insignificant. Bolton herself acknowledges that ‘...textiles have, in the Western system, generally not been defined as art but rather as craft...Often deemed with the classification of ‘craft,’ textiles, and especially non-loom-woven textiles are among the least well regarded’ (Bolton 2003, XXII). Through her experiences in museum work, she sees textiles and other objects ‘made by or associated with women’ are under-represented in collections and not viewed by Westerners as art. Therefore in her own research Bolton creates a vision of the significance of materials made and used by women in order to fill in a gap left by past research. This vision is combined
with the concept she is attempting to insert into Vanuatu national ideology through her work for the Vanuatu Cultural Centre that ‘women have kastom, too’ (Bolton 2003, XIII). The result is that Bolton sees and represents photographically the textiles as the embodiment of Ni-Vanuatu women’s knowledge and participation in traditional community life.

Within her written text Bolton explains that the pandanus textiles are completely identified with women as their sole producers and major users, while men have little connection to detailed knowledge of this aspect of kastom. She states that ‘men are never directly involved in the production of mats… assisting in neither the weaving nor the dyeing of them. Men do not have any detailed knowledge about mat types, weave and patterns’ (Bolton 1996, 118). Bolton continues by connecting women to mats and mats to significant social events, remarking ‘…it is women who dominate the exchange of mats, and exchanges of mats mark all the traditional formal occasions of Ambaean social life’ (Bolton 1996, 114). Thereby she reveals her perception of Ni-Vanuatu women as important members in the practicing of kastom. Bolton moves on to further expand on the importance of mats in community life and in particular exchanges, stating that as many as 1500 mats may be needed in an event such as a marriage.

Bolton’s photographic portion of the article also reveals these two related claims; that only women can deal with textiles and that textiles are necessary in Ni-Vanuatu life. First if we look to the three photos of Bolton which contain figures, two include almost entirely women and children, emphasizing the women’s roles (See figures 61 and 62). The third photo depicts just a pair of hands, but we are informed by Bolton through the captions that these hands belong to a woman; Margaret Solomon. On the other hand the photos published out of Vanuatu shows many men not only in attendance, but also as key members in the events. One such photo shows a male official speaking at the opening of the
workshop in Ambae (See figure 66). Another photo depicts a Ni-Vanuatu man folding a textile in the course of an exchange. From this comparison it is evident that Bolton is using her background in the Ambae Project to shaping her interpretation of the textiles and thus see the textiles as solely the domain of island women, completely excluding any male participation.

**Concepts of Time**

The concept of time present in Bolton’s work vastly differs from that we have noted in previous chapters, as she does not appear to spatialized time in a manner similar to the other photographers. Due to Bolton’s extensive background in contemporary Pacific Island images, it can be assumed that she is well aware of these older perceptions which are now viewed as degrading and even racist. Her work, however, does deal with temporal issues in the written and photographic text, as she attempts to interpret and represent Ni-Vanuatu women’s production of textiles as a continuing practice of the past.

This interpretation is clear from the very outset as Bolton starts her written text at the beginning of the island’s time with the creation and settlement history. Through this written work she demonstrates that textiles were significant and were significantly connected to women from the very foundation of kastom. She then continues this theme in her use of photos of textiles collected by Speiser during his field work from 1910 to 1912 (See figures 57 and 58). The inclusion of these photos reveals that Bolton views textile production as uninterrupted throughout the process of colonization. She then notes in the caption of these photos whether or not the dyed patterns shown are still in use on Ambae. Bolton make her interpretation of a continuing tradition further evident in her photo of a contemporary woman wearing new textiles made with the same dyed pattern of the Vule or moon seen in the photo of Speiser textile (Compare figure 57 to figure 61; the central
Bolton's interpretations and representations reveal her vision of textiles as continuing from the distant past. For Bolton this is a significant point as it adds to the notion that Ni-Vanuatu women, not only are now, but have always been the holders of their own kastom.

Another interesting point relating to time emerges yet again from a comparison of the Ni-Vanuatu photos to Bolton's own. In the photos from the Vanuatu publication we find representations not only of Ni-Vanuatu women's participation in textile related events but also representations of Bolton herself (See figure 67). The inclusion of Bolton, photographed killing a pig, has the effect of making the event more specific in its time, as it is clear that her record of the event took place at one specific location in space and time. By not revealing her presence in her own photos, the viewer is allowed to imagine that these photographs could represent any moment of exchange on Ambae. Even though within the written text Bolton does make note of a few small changes in textiles production that have recently taken place, the photos represent Bolton's vision and representation of mat production and exchange as a timeless tradition.

Conclusions

To me Bolton's photographic representations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles are among the most interesting in this discussion, as for the first time we see a scholar directly attempting to alter the dominant constructed image of women's creations. Unlike the previous scholars/photographers, she does not build upon interpretations and images of past foreigners; rather she writes against these notions to present a new representation of the meaning of the textiles. Another reason I find an exploration of Bolton's work so fascinating is her constructed image of the textiles is most easily accepted as truth or reality; perhaps because I myself come from a similar community as Bolton, where the predominant belief is that
women's skills in creating meaningful art have been vastly overlooked by male community and academic leaders. I, too, possess a framework through which Ni-Vanuatu women's textiles creations can be viewed as needing to break with the classification of 'craft.' I think that because it would have been so easy for me to simply accept Bolton's images as truth or as representative of the 'real' meaning of Ni-Vanuatu textiles, is one reason why I decided to include the Ni-Vanuatu photographs as a means of comparison. As previously stated, I did not present these photos in order to situate them as the 'reality' of the textiles; rather I hoped that they would reveal that all photos can only represent the interpretations which emerge from one particular culture or community, as all photos primarily represent the socialized photographer's framing or re-order of the physical world around him or her.

1 No record of the type of camera or equipment Bolton used was kept.
Figure 57: Gwana mat with vule pattern, Bolton

Figure 58: Singo tuvegi, Bolton
Figure 59: Mataitalai Plaiting, Bolton

Figure 60: Margaret Solomon Weaving, Bolton
Figure 61: Women of Lolovoli, Bolton

Figure 62: Women Presenting Mats, Bolton
Trifala woman ia blong Ambae oli soem tabu mat we hemi niu, oli kalarem wetem lokol vejeteboi dae (dye). Nem blong mat hemi Matataitai.

Figure 63: Woman holding textile, Ni-Vanuatu publication

Figure 64: Women holding textiles, Ni-Vanuatu publication
Figure 65: Workshop in Ambae, Ni-Vanuatu publication

Figure 66: Opening of a Workshop, Ni-Vanuatu publication

Figure 67: Man Holding Mat, Ni-Vanuatu publication
Figure 68: Bolton, Ni-Vanuatu publication
Conclusions
Conclusions

Through this investigation of foreign still photography of Ni-Vanuatu textiles, I have learnt a great deal about the process of interpretation and the construction of images. I do see, however, that there still remains lots of room for further explorations of how these constructed impressions influence or touch down within the lives of current Ni-Vanuatu community members.

First and foremost, I am now aware of how meanings are assigned to objects from ‘other’ communities, or communities geographically and culturally distant from the interpreter’s own. To me it seems that as persons live their lives and are socialized into their specific social, political and aesthetic environments, they build up a visual memory through which meanings are attributed to the physical world around them. In fact, these original environments create very personal, visual and conceptual frameworks. Once this framework is in place it structures a person’s existence in the material world; when objects are encountered or interacted with they can only be interpreted through this framework. The physical world, thus, becomes re-ordered according to the person’s experience with it. If a new or unfamiliar piece of material culture is experienced it becomes immediately placed within this pre-formed or pre-existing framework and it therefore categorized based on a particular person’s past experience. Through this discussion of photography, I believe that it has been demonstrated that the act of taking a photograph reveals not the ‘reality’ or the ‘true’ meaning of the physical world; rather the photographer’s framing displays the meaning he or she has assigned to the material object. This meaning, itself, is based on the photographer’s visual re-ordering of their physical environments. Nicolas Thomas has really been the foremost proponent of the concept that objects are continually re-assigned new meanings as they are recontextualized within a person’s constructed view of their world.
What I am suggesting, however, is that these new meanings are represented in a visual means through an individual's framing of the object in his/her photographic work. In this discussion we have seen how varied both foreign interpretations of Ni-Vanuatu textiles can be and thus how differently their photographic representations are constructed.

This discussion has also led me to think about how various interpretations and representations can build upon one another. In this case many different elements within colonial discourse have communicated their impressions of Ni-Vanuatu textiles until an image or categorization was constructed. From the renderings of Hodges up to the tourism booklet's photos of the 1970, textiles as clothing were framed within the foreign image of Ni-Vanuatu women as having little or no social status within their own communities. Thus, the clothing worn by these women and the textiles they created became interpreted and marked as lacking any social, political or spiritual significance. Likewise, as the textiles viewed from within the framework of Vanuatu temporal distance from the 'West,' they became interpreted as symbols of 'uncivilized,' 'heathen' or 'traditional' ways of life.

The question I now find myself presented with is- How are these foreign interpretations or impression of Ni-Vanuatu relevant in today's island communities? I think that there are many places where these constructed views of the material culture and, in particular textiles, actually touch down in contemporary daily life. Although I do realize that a great deal of research must take place within Ni-Vanuatu communities before a statement regarding the relevance of the foreign interpretations can be made, I would like to suggest a couple of areas where these 'outsider' impressions might be pertinent. The interaction between foreign nations where these images were created and Ni-Vanuatu communities has greatly increased due to many processes often categorized under the all inclusive label of 'globalization.' It, therefore, does seem to me that an investigation of how foreign textiles
interpretations influence the many Ni-Vanuatu social, political, economic, artistic and physical worlds might prove fruitful.

The first area where I believe these interpretations might interact with day to day living in Vanuatu might be in women's political and corporal experiences, and in the connections between these two aspects of personal realities. Because of the foreign constructs of Ni-Vanuatu clothing as either simple, functional, heathen, crude or meaningless, there has of yet been no detailed exploration of how clothing may shape women's lives and experiences.

I believe that clothing was initially under-valued and/or under-studied by foreigners because it was seen through frameworks formed 'outside' the island communities, while in Ni-Vanuatu life it might be more significant. In 1980, just on the eve of independence, Grace Mera Molisa, a Ni-Vanuatu female activist wrote of Vevineata, a mythical Ambae female hero who poses as a man by dressing in traditional male clothing. Within this guise she becomes one of the most productive and successful members of her community, creating those forms that are normally only accessible to men. Once another community member happened to see under her clothing and she was revealed as a woman. Tim Curtis has also reported on a Malakula tale of Vin'bum'bau, a mythical woman who thought she was a man for many years. Again it seems significant that she dressed in masculine clothing and again became very productive as a man in her community, gaining and supporting many wives. Soon a man came to her home and this time he explained to her how she was different then a man by having sex with her. Through these myths it may be seen that in contrast to the West (our myths centre upon the weakness of women), Ni-Vanuatu women are not perceived as being physically unable to produce the work of men. It does not seem to be a person's sex which defines their creative/productive abilities. Rather it is their
'clothing', representative of socially assigned gender roles, which limits their productive creativity. Today, we do have evidence that clothing as a defining feature of existence is still dealt with. We know that Ni-Vanuatu women are struggling to change their roles in their communities, as they fight for equality in the educational system, improvement in gendered conditions of wage labor, and for representation in the government. (Donald 2002) Interestingly, these women are simultaneously struggling to change their forms of socially acceptable dress, as they are wearing pants or traosis; only to be meant with opposition from the male leaders of their communities. (Bolton, 2003)

I think: that throughout this discussion we have also seen that foreigners have constructed a view of the textiles as not holding social significance within their physical forms; thus not being categorized as Fine Art. Although, Bolton does write against this image of women's creations as meaning 'craft,' she continues to deal with the object from an anthropological framework which maintains their placement outside of the definition of Fine Art. In fact, as the Contemporary art scene within Vanuatu is based on foreign Western traditions, it remains difficult for women to break into these worlds and become recognized as true artists in their own right.
Bibliography


(discussed in detail within body of proposal)

Dark, Philip 2002 ‘Using Photographs to visualize the art of the Kilenge’ in 2002 Pacific Art; Persistence, Change and Meaning. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.


Forster, George 1777 *A Voyage Around the World*. Dublin: Printed for W. Whitestone


Rodman, Bill April 1998 'In Memoriam: Joel Bonnemaison' in Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania Newsletter. #100


Suaalii, Tamasailau M 1999 'Deconstructing the 'Extoic' Female Beauty of the Pacific Islands' in Bittersweet.


--------------. 1992 'Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth Century Evangelical Propaganda' Comparative Studies in Society and History, 34 (2)


