

EMBODIED INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUES: THE BIOGRAPHY OF A SAMOAN NECKLACE IN COLOGNE

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Since Adrienne Kaeppler's major publication (Kaeppler 1978a) on objects associated with the voyages of James Cook, in which she traced the history of individual objects in order to document their attribution to Cook and his voyages, many similar studies have been done on ethnographic collections in museums around the world. This body of work has evolved into an approach that regards objects and collections as having lives of their own (see Kopytoff 1986 and, more generally, Appadurai 1986a) and, in particular for the Pacific, assigns them agency and thereby multi-layered and non-linear biographies similar to those of humans (see Gosden and Knowles 2001, Gosden and Marshall 1999, Thomas 1991). The approach thus differs markedly from traditional art-historical and anthropological approaches to objects that see them as innate, passive entities, as possessing meaning but not actively creating and shaping it (cf. Hoskins 1998, where objects are used to tell the life stories of people rather than those of the objects themselves).

More recently, Kaeppler (2003) introduced the concept of "inter-cultural dialogues" to the study of material culture. This idea has stimulated theorising against some rigid art-historical distinctions that deny objects active agency and encouraged studies that focus on the interplay of ideas and objects.¹ The notion of inter-cultural dialogues as employed by Kaeppler assumes that there are, and have long been, interactions between people in different parts of the Pacific and, for at least three centuries, between the Pacific and the West. These interactions have led to the interchange of ideas and technologies, the adaption of innovations and the blending of cultural and artistic forms. This approach rightly assumes that artistic styles and conventions, just like any other aspect of a given culture, are in a constant state of flux and change, and that judgements about an object's authenticity should not rest solely on art-historical typologies and values. Such conventional notions of authenticity continue to influence understandings of historic and present Polynesian art and material culture. They deny those objects authenticity and thereby significant value because of the incorporation of new, Western or simply different materials or styles (see Shiner 1994 for a concise overview of the politics of authenticity).

In this article, I discuss an object that exemplifies this notion of inter-cultural dialogue. A close study of its biography reveals the variety of dialogues embodied within it and within objects like it. The object in question

is a necklace, known as *wasekaseka* in Fijian or *'ula lei* in Samoan, made from the ivory of Pacific sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*). The necklace was acquired in Samoa by a German collector sometime before 1903 and sold to a German museum, where it was acquired as a Samoan object and subsequently reclassified as a Fijian object. I will explore the biography of this object by considering its reclassification, drawing particular attention to contemporary images of Samoans and comparative art-historical materials. In exploring the biography of this necklace, the issue at hand is not whether it is Fijian or Samoan, but why it is identified as one or the other. In so doing, I argue two main points:

First, that the distinction between Samoan and Fijian necklaces of this particular type was not as clear-cut at the onset of the 20th century as suggested by previous scholarship. Rather, during this period a change occurred in the artistic conventions of fashioning these necklaces in Samoa.

Second, and more importantly, I argue that the necklace's changing attribution as either Samoan or Fijian throughout its biography illustrates several inter-cultural dialogues: between three cultures of West Polynesia, that is, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa; between coloniser (Germany) and colonised (Samoa); and between the European West in general and the Polynesian South Seas as a whole. Studying an object from a biographical perspective and incorporating the idea of inter-cultural dialogues showcases diverse levels of meaning and value associated with an object and illustrates how both original and acquired meanings are an essential, constituent part of an object's biography. It is the necklace's multi-layered meaning that ought to be recognised as vital and valuable facets of its history and ongoing "life", when it is studied abstractly as an artistic expression, and within its present context, the museum.

Kaeppler's notion of inter-cultural dialogues is particularly pertinent in this case, as the main archipelagos of West Polynesia have been in more or less constant contact through exchanges of material culture, people and ideas since Lapita times (Kirch 2000:210). The type of necklace discussed here gained popularity in Fiji in the mid- to late 19th century, and there have been many documented cases of the movement of individuals and ideas between the major islands of West Polynesia during that period.

The work of authors such as Kaeppler (1978b), Clunie (1986) and Tuimaleali'ifano (1990) provides convincing testimony that people continuously moved between the islands, cross-fertilising the separate cultures of West Polynesia with the ideas and materials of the other cultures of the region. The necklace I discuss in this article has the potential to stand for all these kinds of interplay—material, personal and ideational. The biographical approach that I employ draws upon concepts developed by Appadurai (1986b)

and Kopytoff (1986) and applied to the Pacific by Kaeppler (1978b), Thomas (1991), Gosden and Marshall (1999) and Gosden and Knowles (2001). All of these scholars were strongly influenced by Marcel Mauss's essay (1925 [1996]) on the relationships between people and objects in the Pacific, which has been extended in recent studies of treasured objects by several scholars, most notably Weiner (1985, 1989, 1992). Linking these approaches with the concepts of inter-cultural dialogues as discussed by Kaeppler (2003) allows one to explore and appreciate various aspects of meaning and significance.

THE NECKLACE IN COLOGNE²

In 1903, the ethnographer and collector Carl Marquardt put a collection of 112 objects and nine photographs from Samoa on the market and offered it to various museums in Germany. Fifty-two of the objects were eventually sold to the ethnographic museum of Cologne, the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, where this acquisition forms the largest portion of the Samoan material there (Thode-Arora 2001:204).³ In addition, Marquardt gifted the nine photographs to the museum. Among the objects acquired was a necklace made of carved sperm whale tooth (Fig. 1).⁴ It consists of 28 slender ivory pendants of a slightly concave form. They are strung along a treaded string of plant fibre. The pendants have a maximum thickness of about 1cm and are up to 13cm in length.



Figure 1. Whale-tooth necklace at the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum für Völkerkunde, Cologne (Inv.-Nr. 11217). Photo: Rheinisches Bildarchiv.

To fashion the pendants, the teeth of the sperm whale were sawn into curved, pointed sections that were subsequently shaped and polished until they reached the desired concave form. The wider end of the separate pendants was cut off at an angle sloping towards the concave side and a hole was drilled at this end so that the concave sides of the pendants were all aligned when strung on the cord. The pendants were kept in place with the string running through these holes as well as by knots between them and another string that runs half way around each pendant (Fig. 2). When worn, the convex sides of the pendants rest against the body of the wearer and the points project outwards. (Note that in the Figure 1 photograph the pendant ends point inwards, the reverse of how the necklace was properly worn.)

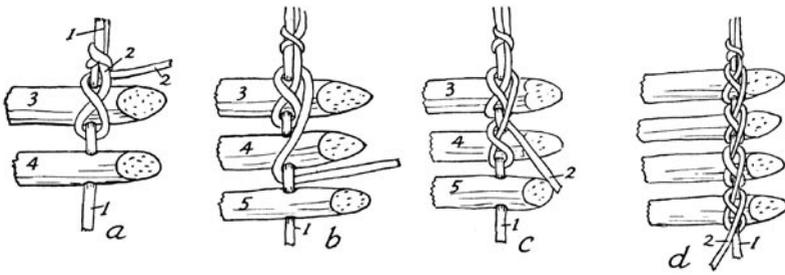


Figure 2. Diagram of Samoan whale-tooth necklace lashing. Drawing by Te Rangi Hiroa (1930:629).

In his sales catalogue, Marquardt (1903:9) described the necklace as a *Prachtstück* (a piece of exceptional beauty) and, following its acquisition, the museum in Cologne kept the necklace as part of the Samoan collection until the 1920s. At that time, the museum's curator came to reconsider the classification of the necklace and concluded that it was of Fijian origin. On the margins of the file he wrote: "According to what Kraemer, Samoa Inseln II 289 mentions about this [type of object], this form of the sperm-whale necklace can only come from Fiji."⁵

Here he was referring to volume II of Augustin Krämer's monumental work, *Die Samoa-Inseln* (1903), on the Samoa Islands. In it, Krämer wrote: "...also on Tonga and Fiji the teeth were ground into similar necklaces but much longer and larger..." and he attributed the shorter pendants of Samoan '*ula lei* to the scarcity of the material and "...more likely to the Samoans [*sic*] more highly developed good taste" (Krämer 1995:336). To demonstrate this difference he referred to a number of photographs in his work illustrating both the Samoan '*ula lei* and the Fijian *wasekaseka*.⁶ More than his somewhat vague differentiation of the pendants of a Samoan necklace as being "at

least half the length of those on Fiji”,⁷ it is probably these photographs that suggested to the curator that the necklace in Cologne was from Fiji rather than from Tonga, or indeed, Samoa. In particular, the necklace in Krämer’s Plate 8 closely resembles the necklace in the Cologne collection. Other characteristic features that distinguished Samoan from Fijian necklaces, according to Krämer, were that the pendants of Samoan *‘ula lei* are considerably thinner and more closely spaced than those of Fijian *wasekaseka*, and, in most cases, are straight rather than curved. These differences would firmly place the Cologne necklace within the Fijian tradition.⁸

The Samoan *‘ula lei* features quite commonly in depictions of Samoans at the turn of the 20th century. In a photograph also held by the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, three young Samoans wearing characteristic Samoan *‘ula lei* (Fig. 3). These two items, *‘ula lei* and *tuiga*, were a significant part of the



Figure 3. Vao, *tāupou* of Apia, and two *mānaia*. Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum für Völkerkunde, Cologne, Inv.-Nr. 10795, N. Georg-Küppers-Loosen.

formal attire of persons of rank: *ali'i* 'chiefs', *tāupou* 'ceremonial village virgins/maidens' who were foremost among the unmarried women in the village, and *mānaia* 'chiefs' sons' who were foremost among the untitled men of the village (Barrow 1972:79, Krämer 1995:336). Te Rangi Hiroa (1930:630) was emphatic on this matter: "...an *'ula lei* necklace is really essential to complete the costume on dress occasions".⁹

Krämer's premise that there is a clear distinction between Samoan and Fijian necklaces made of sperm whale tooth would therefore appear to be correct and the reclassification of the necklace in Cologne an appropriate act. Nevertheless, I question whether the distinction made by Krämer is quite so clear-cut. Indeed, I argue that both styles of *'ula lei* were in use in Samoa at the beginning of the 20th century, and that in fact they were seen as Samoan objects, not foreign imports, by people such as Carl Marquardt. After all, he included one in his Samoan collection offered to the Cologne museum and this has had a direct effect on this necklace's biography.

THE CASE FOR MISATTRIBUTION

The first reason for questioning the necklace's Fijian attribution is that Krämer himself expended a great deal of effort detailing the differences between Samoan and Fijian necklaces. If there was such a clear difference, why did he need to comment on Fijian necklaces at such length in a work devoted to Samoa? Among his illustrations, there is also a photograph (Fig. 4), albeit not his own, showing a young Samoan woman from 'Upolu who is, as the caption reads, "a daughter of a Samoan chief from Falefā with Fijian style hairstyle and Fijian necklace of sperm whale teeth" (Krämer 1995:20). This immediately raises the question of why the daughter of a Samoan chief would attire herself with a Fijian necklace and style her hair in a Fijian manner.¹⁰ Moreover, what prompted Krämer to include this photograph in his book, and who was the photographer?

Picturing Samoans

Of course, the appearance of the Fijian type of necklace and hairstyle in the picture could be interpreted as a case of artistic license on the part of the unknown photographer, who might have been trying to evoke a striking image by showing this more elaborate object. There was a well documented and flourishing photograph and postcard industry in Samoa around the turn of the century. John Davis, Alfred John Tattersall, Thomas Andrew and other photographers had studios in Apia where they contrived exotic scenes which they knew would attract the attention of Western viewers.¹¹ While they presented their photographs as contributions to the documentation of

anthropological, ethnographic or other scientific research, their photographs were very often depictions of Samoan women as exotic and erotic beauties.¹² The degree of authenticity of these images represented as realistic depictions arguably varied, but apparently all photographs in which the Fijian *wasekaseka* necklaces feature were taken by professional photographers and often taken in improvised studios settings.

However, while the staged character of the scenes, in some cases revealed by the cardboard or canvas backdrops, can be recognised quite easily in most cases, these necklaces seem to be the only material item of ethnographic distortion that cannot be identified without some ethnographic background knowledge. If it was acceptable to exaggerate the visual message by using a Fijian necklace, why were other Polynesian items not used to the same effect, or why was no Samoan tattooing photographed? Most likely the answer can

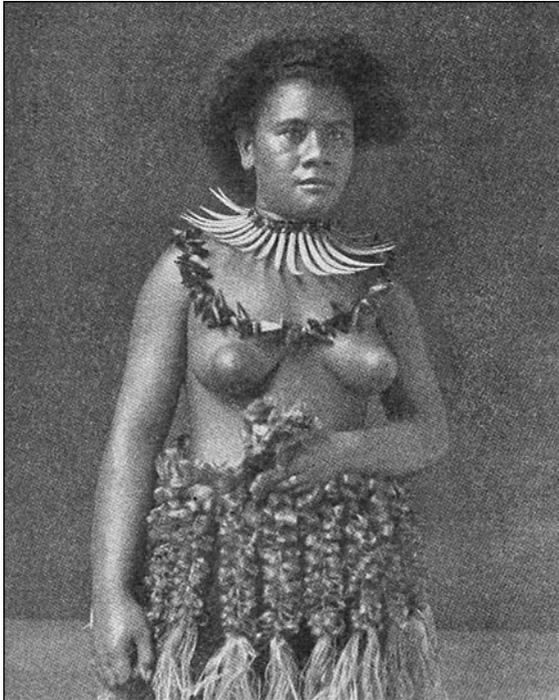


Figure 4. Daughter of a Samoan chief from Falefā. Private collection (also published in Krämer 1995: Plate 8).

be found in the background and experiences of the photographers, or, as is the case with regard to the necklace in Cologne, of the collector.

The brothers Carl and Fritz Marquardt had first-hand experience of Samoan life and customs. It would therefore seem odd for Carl to include an object of non-Samoan origin in his collection. Carl had spent several years living in Samoa as a private planter, and from his experience there he wrote a book on Samoan tattooing (Marquardt 1899), which is the first thorough treatment of the subject based on ethnographic fieldwork. His brother Fritz had been the head of the police force in Apia and at one point was a member of the Samoan government council (Steffen-Schrade 1998:368, *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* 3 July 1910). Both brothers spoke near-fluent Samoan and, after their return to Germany around the turn of the century, they were jointly engaged in the business of so-called *Völkerkundliche Schausstellungen* or *Völkerschauen*. These “Ethnographic Shows” presented exotic peoples and cultures to German audiences and travelled extensively throughout Germany and Europe.¹³ Even before his permanent return to Germany, Carl Marquardt was active in the business of *Völkerschauen*. Apart from tours featuring other cultures, the brothers organised four Samoan shows, which toured through Germany in 1890, 1895-97, 1900-1901 and 1910.

A Poster and a Postcard

Relevant to the present discussion are a poster and a postcard advertising the tour of 1900-1901. The poster (Fig. 5), which originally was printed in colour, promoted the 1901 show staged in the Frankfurt Zoological Garden. It features an exotic female beauty, presumably Samoan, in frontal view. Her image blends both direct and indirect references to eroticism that, in light of their heavy-handed form of depiction, can only be assumed to be intentional. The woman is depicted nude, her breasts concealed by the body of a snake that, through its curled body, forms the letter “S” of the word “Samoa”. Her heavy-lidded gaze, her slightly parted, pouting, ruby-red lips and her thrust towards the viewer lend the image an air of sensuality and lasciviousness. In particular, the imagery evokes associations with Eve as it connotes both a pure, carefree Garden of Eden (the white orchid) and the Original Sin (the snake).¹⁴

The woman’s necklace is not unlike the one now in the Cologne museum. With its longer, wider and curved pendants, it clearly differs from the “Samoan type” described by Krämer. Posters of this type were generally designed using postcards and other photographs as templates (Schmidt-Linsenhoff 1986:232) and it is reasonable to suppose that this was the case in this instance. As in the photographs described above, the use of the Fijian necklace here is unlikely to be merely the result of a thoughtless reproduction from a picture showing a South Seas beauty wearing this kind of necklace, but rather a purposeful means of heightening the exotic and erotic appeal of the woman.



Figure 5. Advertising poster for a Samoan *Völkerschau* organised by the Marquardt brothers in 1901. Historisches Museum der Stadt Frankfurt, Plakatsammlung, Inv.-No. C 13060c. Photo: Ursula Seitz-Gray.

The whiteness of the ivory stands in contrast to the darker and more subdued colours of the rest of the poster and draws attention to the woman's bare, tan skin. Furthermore, the necklace's pendants are easily recognised as teeth, perhaps even a gaping mouth of teeth, which might well have been interpreted by viewers of that era as appropriate to a primitive, barbarian world.

The posters advertising these shows were not personally designed by Marquardt, but he would have seen and approved the designs.¹⁵ While references to exoticism and eroticism were undoubtedly used to raise the profile and commercial profit of the shows, Marquardt did try to showcase his ethnographic credentials in order to set his enterprise apart from other, supposedly less scientific or scholarly, undertakings. The appearance of the necklace in the poster suggests that he did not consider it an ethnographic misrepresentation or cultural aberration.¹⁶

A postcard produced in 1900 advertising the same *Völkerschau* tour is equally, if not more, interesting, as it is a photograph of Samoans (Fig. 6) rather than a painted poster. The text under the image reads: "Unsere neuen Landsleute aus Samoa" (Our new fellow countrymen from Samoa), the same



Figure 6. Postcard “Unsere neuen Landsleute aus Samoa” (“Our new fellow countrymen from Samoa”). Stuttgart, Linden-Museum (S 35, N. Augustin Krämer).

title as is printed on the poster from Frankfurt. This slogan was the title of the 1900-1901 tour, which celebrated Germany's possession of the western Samoan islands as colony in March 1900.

The poster and particularly the postcard advertising the 1900 show, and indeed the show itself, need to be placed in the historical context of Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. Throughout the second half of the previous century the United States, Great Britain and the German Empire had struggled with one another to gain full colonial possession of the entire Samoan archipelago. This struggle contributed to the numerous civil wars among Samoan factions, with the Samoan adversaries supporting and being supported by one or another of the colonial contenders. In spite of shifting allegiances, the German Empire continued to support Mata'afa Iosefa's claim to Samoan leadership throughout the struggle (Meleisea 1987:47). While the initial interest of these three nations in the islands was strategic and economic, economists and military strategists on all sides soon realised that actual profits from the islands were marginal at best. Nonetheless, Samoa had become for these metropolitan powers a symbolic acquisition in the international race for colonial possessions. Surrendering claims to Samoa was perceived as a loss of face and a national disgrace, especially in Germany.¹⁷ Finally, at the Berlin Conference in 1899 the colonial contenders decided among themselves that the islands from Savai'i in the west to 'Upolu in the east would be placed under official German colonial control, while the United States would take possession of the islands to the east of 'Upolu. Great Britain lost out in Samoa, but was compensated by being granted colonial possessions in the New Hebrides and West Africa, and protective oversight of Tonga. For Germany possession of the larger and more populous western islands was seen as a national victory, securing Germany's own *Platz an der Sonne* (Place in the Sun) and the German population, imbued with this national obsession with Samoa, flocked to the 1900-01 show.

What then is the significance of the postcard in light of the "historical moment". Nine Samoan men arranged in three rows are depicted. Three men are sitting cross-legged on the floor in front of three men, presumably sitting on stools or a bench, behind whom three men are standing. All the figures are bare-chested, except one. The man sitting in the centre of the central row, sitting in the very centre of the nine person arrangement, is wearing a Western-style white collared shirt with a dark tie, though he also, like the eight others, wears a wrap-around barkcloth *lavalava*. Then, as today, this central figure is wearing the formal dress of chiefs, politicians, clergy and other elites—a collared shirt and tie with a *lavalava*, which may be supplemented by a formal jacket or sports coat.¹⁸ His grey hair suggests that he is the oldest of the men in the picture. In addition, unlike the other men in the photograph, he is not adorned with necklaces, flowers or head-dresses.

However, he is holding two clear marks of rank: in his left hand a *to'oto'o* 'wooden orator's staff' and in his right hand a *fue* 'fly whisk'. The length of the fly whisk indicates that this is an orator's fly whisk and the individual is thus a *tūlāfale* 'orator/talking chief'.¹⁹ The men at his sides and in front of him are all wearing flowers in their hair and various necklaces. Three of them are wearing a precious *'ula nifo* around their necks, a necklace consisting of a single curled boar's tusk, almost forming a complete circle. This type of adornment was as precious as the *'ula lei* and *tāupou* could use them as substitutes for *'ula lei* on formal occasions when no *'ula lei* were available (Grattan 1985 [1948]:116). These *'ula nifo* could also be worn on the upper arm, as many contemporary photographs indicate (see Fig. 7).²⁰



Figure 7. A *mānaia* adorned with an *'ula nifo* and an *'ula lei* made of *pualulu* blossoms. Private collection (also published in Krämer 1995: Plate 109).

The three men standing in the back row deserve close inspection. All three are wearing several items of personal adornment of the highest quality and value. Foremost is a complete head dress (*tuiga lauulu*), consisting of a framework of three staffs (*lave*) decorated with feathers, bands (presumably of bark cloth) and shells, which supports the hair ornament (*lauulu*) made of human hair and a headband made of nautilus shell (*pale fuiono*).²¹ All three have *'ula nifo* tied around their upper left arms, and most significant for my argument, all three are wearing *'ula lei* around their necks. While these necklaces are certainly smaller than, for example, the one worn by the chief's daughter from Falefā (Fig. 4), which Krämer identified as Fijian, they are also quite different from the ones he regarded as Samoan. The individual pendants of the necklaces on the postcard appear thicker and somewhat longer, and they also appear to be more curved. In short, their appearance is very close to that of the necklace sold by Marquardt to the Cologne museum.

What is so striking about this photograph is the abundance of objects of highest value; the headdress (*tuiga lauulu*) and *'ula lei* were probably the most valuable items of personal decoration in use in turn-of-the-century Samoa (Te Rangi Hiroa 1930:629). The value of the *'ula lei* may be attributed to the scarcity of whaleteeth, and this value meant that only *ali'i*, *tāupou* and *mānaia* were entitled to wear the ornament. The *'ula nifo* was of equal value and served as a substitute for the *'ula lei* and was therefore exclusive to this same elite or titled group. This leads me to conclude that the group of nine men on the postcard were of high social rank, and further to suggest that they were the group of chiefs and their sons engaged in Marquardt's tour of 1895, some five years before the tour advertised in this photograph. One of the participants of this tour was Mata'afa Iosefo, who was among the highest ranking chiefs of Samoa at the time and, as mentioned above, had long been Germany's preferred candidate for supreme Samoan leadership. During his stay in Germany in 1895, Mata'afa was received by the Kaiser and several regional nobility in Germany, and a comparison with known photographs of Mata'afa suggests that the centre man is indeed Mata'afa Iosefo (see, for example, Plate 1 in Meleisea 1987).

The 1895 German tour was regarded by the Samoans as equivalent to a state visit. Emele-Mao Teo Fairbairn, recalling this tour in which her parents took part, described the Samoans who went on the trip as the combination of an "official delegation" and an accompanying cultural group of "*taupou* from certain villages" (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:25). It is altogether probable that the Marquardt brothers misrepresented the nature of these tours when approaching Samoans to participate in them, given what is known about the 1910 show. This show was organised to mark the decade of Germany's possession of Western Samoa. Among those on show was Tamasese Lealofi,

another high chief of Samoa, who joined the tour under the misconception that he would be visiting Germany's nobility rather than exhibiting himself and his fellow Samoans as ethnographic curiosities in a *Völkerschau*. In fact, growing public concern during that tour about the treatment of Tamasese and the other Samoans eventually resulted in the visitors enjoying improved food, housing and sanitary conditions, as well as providing Tamasese with the opportunity to meet some German dignitaries: the Mayor of the City of Frankfurt, the Bavarian Prince Regent and, ultimately, the Kaiser himself (Riedel 1938:219f., Steffen-Schrade 1998:384).

Returning to the postcard again: given that the nine individuals represented are most likely chiefly members of the 1895 tour, one may assume that they would have exerted at least *some* influence on the way in which they were represented when posing for a formal photograph. The inclusion of the official insignia of an orator chief—the staff and the fly whisk, the presence of *'ula lei* and *'ula nifo* adornments, and the combination of clothing items traditionally signifying authority and value (the bark cloth *lavalava* and the head dresses) with those of contemporary authority and status (the cotton shirt and tie) all suggest that this is how these visiting Samoans wanted to be portrayed. Furthermore, it is altogether possible that these nine individuals had brought their own adornments with them.²²

Yet, this *is* a studio photograph, produced, or indeed reproduced, as an advertisement for the *Völkerschau*. One must therefore be careful about attributing too much ethnographic value to the image. Victoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff (1986:232) points out in her discussion of the aforementioned poster from Frankfurt (Fig. 7) that the shows are “easily recognisable as the wishful and simultaneously fearful projection of the “white man” of Western civilisation of the late 19th century, [and] the conversion into an advertising poster image again exposes this imagination to a process of simplification, sharpening of focus and stylisation”. In other words, the poster through simplification focused on prevalent ideas about eroticism and exoticism. By contrast, the postcard portrayed exotic nobility that evoked a kind of respect for a people who had become “fellow countrymen”. In both instances, the inclusion of necklaces that were not “really” Samoan objects may easily be attributed to these objectives. But might there be another way of looking at this?

Certainly it was not a direct aim of the instigators of these travelling shows to further academic research, and it largely remained the responsibility of the management of the zoos, which hosted the shows, to point out the academic relevance and educational potential of them (Steffen-Schrade 1998:381). But the case of Carl Marquardt was rather different; he had made his name in the ethnological community of the German Empire. His 1890 and 1895

shows were advertised by Rudolf Virchow, the chairman of the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory (*Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*), as educational, and he encouraged members of the Society to visit them (Virchow 1890, 1895). Following the publication of his book on Samoan tattooing (Marquardt 1899), Carl Marquardt was certainly regarded as an authority on Samoan ethnology.²³ His correspondence with the Cologne museum about his collection also testifies to his thorough knowledge and understanding of Samoan custom and material culture.²⁴

It strikes me as curious, then, that a man with such considerable scholarly knowledge of and personal familiarity with Samoa would allow the inclusion of supposedly non-Samoan adornments in posters and postcards advertising his *Völkerschau* and even bearing his name. More puzzling is why he would include such an item in a collection of objects he himself describes as “a nearly exhaustive collection of all Samoan products consisting in the most part of selected beautiful pieces” (Marquardt 1903:3) if it was not in fact a Samoan product, and thus representative of Samoan culture.

'ULA LEI AND WASEKASEKA: TYPES OR STYLES

I have argued above that Krämer's distinction between Samoan *'ula lei* and Fijian *wasekaseka* was in fact not as clear-cut at the beginning of the 20th century as he claimed. Indeed, I contend that both styles of necklace were in use in Samoa at that time, and they are more appropriately described as *two styles of the same type* of Samoan necklaces: a Fijian-style *'ula lei* and of a Samoan-style *'ula lei*. Both were present in Samoa, worn by Samoans in photographs—especially the postcard from the 1900 *Völkerschau* (Fig. 8)—and apparently regarded by people like Marquardt as recognisably Samoan; all testimony that both styles were used interchangeably by Samoans at the time.²⁵

Of course, this does not answer the question of whether the Fijian-style necklace was the product of an indigenous Samoan workshop or indeed whether they were produced in Samoa at all. The absence of any mention in the earlier literature of the more elaborate style of *'ula lei* suggests that at least until some point in the early to mid- 19th century the Samoan style was the dominant, perhaps exclusive, style in Samoa.²⁶ Krämer attributed this style to the “more highly developed good taste” of Samoans (Krämer 1995:336), but also mentioned that the scarcity of the whale ivory might account for the Samoan style. In fact, he points out that “Samoans [were] unable to catch [sperm whales and] were limited to carcasses washed ashore or to bartering with Fiji” (Krämer 1995:335). It is this line of argument that Sean Mallon follows in his most recent discussion of Samoan art (Mallon 2002:176).

Mallon's contention is that these necklaces were originally made for Fijian chiefs by Tongan and Samoan canoe builders who had begun to settle in Fiji in the later 1700s. In discussing Fijian *wasekaseka*, Clunie (1986:160) wrote that this particular type of necklace "likely evolved during the early 1800s in response to the introduction of metal tools and to the marked increase in the supply of Sperm Whale teeth brought in by traders". Mallon (2002:176), developing this argument, has argued that these necklaces made their way from Fiji to Tonga and Samoa not long thereafter, both as finished necklaces, and presumably also as part of the artistic repertoire of Samoan carvers returning or visiting from Fiji.

The importance and continuity of the migration of Tongan and, more importantly, Samoan canoe builders to Fiji in the late 17th and 18th century has been illustrated by Tuimaleali'ifano (1990) and this connection was an important conduit for material and cultural exchange between the archipelagos of Western Polynesia. As the work of Kaeppler (1978b) and Tcherkézoff (2004) (who mainly focus on individuals and material culture) and the contributors to the volume edited by Huntsman (1995) (who explored the interplay of cultural concepts and practices with regard to gender and socio-political organisation) has shown, the links between the archipelagos of Western Polynesia were strong, ongoing and multi-directional, and individual Fijians and Samoans maintained close personal relationships (Roth and Hooper 1990:442, 449f.).²⁷ People, materials and ideas moved actively and quickly along these lines of communication and it would be surprising if ivory and *wasekaseka* did not reach Samoa through these channels.

Before the 19th century, the Ha'apai group and the coral reefs of Vava'u in Tonga were the sources of most whale ivory, lying as they do in the path of the migration routes of sperm whales. Whale ivory was a rare and highly valuable trade good, so it is likely that only limited amounts of whale ivory made their way to Samoa. Scarcity may have had more to do with the smaller pendants on Samoan style *'ula lei* than any speculation as to Samoan taste (especially when projected by a foreigner).

With the arrival of Western whalers in the early 19th century, the quantity of whale ivory increased enormously. Further, the introduction of metal tools meant that the ivory could be worked with far greater ease and precision. Over the century, this development may have been the decisive factor in the introduction and spread of the Fijian-style necklace in Samoa especially since, as Mallon points out, Samoan wood carvers would have been intimately familiar with this style and its manufacture. The adoption of the Fijian style seems to have been so comprehensive that in the mid-20th century, when Te Rangi Hiroa described the *'ula lei* he made no mention whatsoever of the Samoan style, and only described necklaces that are clearly of the Fijian style, with their longer, thicker and more curved pendants (Te Rangi Hiroa 1930:630).

Indeed, the Fijian-style *'ula lei* necklaces has become so commonplace in Samoa that some necklaces that had actually been collected in Fiji are regarded as of Samoan origin. This is the case, for example, with the one serving as the cover illustration for the latest work on Samoan art (Mallon 2002) and which had been taken from a display case of Samoan artefacts at the Auckland Museum. In both these cases, the necklace was regarded as Samoan, while the documentation indicated that it had indeed been collected in Fiji.²⁸

THE BIOGRAPHY OF OBJECTS

My discussion so far has sought to demonstrate that the strict distinction between Fijian and Samoan sperm whale necklaces, which Augustin Krämer made, is flawed, and that there is reason to doubt that Samoans of the late 19th and early 20th centuries would have regarded necklaces like the one now in Cologne as foreign and, therefore, artistically or culturally out of place. However, I wish to be clear that it is not my intention here to question this “strict” art-historical distinction as it is to draw attention to the importance of the cultural history of objects, as exemplified by the history of the Cologne necklace.

Since the work of Marcel Mauss on *The Gift* (1996, originally published in 1925), most scholars of anthropology and material culture have been aware of the special personal and social relationships Polynesians have with certain objects that sometimes enter exchange relationships. Mauss used examples from Aotearoa/New Zealand and Samoa to describe the conundrum of keeping while giving and discussed at length the Maori *hau*, the “spirit of things” with its animating force as he called it (Mauss 1996:11). Annette Weiner also used examples from those two regions to discuss her concept of inalienability (Weiner 1985, 1992).

This theoretical work has been supplemented by a number of recent ethnographic studies of particular Polynesian objects and their meaning to the people producing and using them. In their analyses of the treasured textiles of Tonga and Samoa, such as Tongan *kie hingoa* ‘named mats’ and Samoan *'ie tōga* ‘fine mats’, Adrienne Kaeppler (1999b), Phyllis Herda (1999) and Penelope Schoeffel (1999) have discussed the mechanisms by which cultural significance is attributed to these objects through their use and their personal histories. Paul Tapsell (1998, 2000) has written about people’s attachment to and historical connections with *taonga* ‘treasures’ in Māori society. What all these works share is an emphasis on the intimate attachment of Polynesians to specific objects and the significance of these objects’ histories, or their personal biographies.

However, while this perception of objects as having a life and a biography of their own is limited to specific types of objects called *taonga* or *tōga* ‘sacred, treasured’, a view of objects in general as having biographies and

lives is not at all foreign to Polynesian thinking. It is therefore appropriate to extend this view to other, more mundane objects, which are now in museums in the West.²⁹ This is not to say, of course, that objects such as Samoan fine mats (*'ie tōga*) or Trobriand *kula* objects, whose individual biographies were recorded and recounted, and who gained value and esteem through these biographies, were conceptually identical with objects such as the necklaces described here. Nevertheless, as Kaeppler (1978b:246) points out, more utilitarian objects such as canoes, wooden bowls or neck rests that were exchanged through formalised networks linking Tonga, Samoa and Fiji came to be regarded “as material manifestations of social relations”. Using a biographical approach towards these more utilitarian objects is therefore not inappropriate and allows one to see the many aspects of their meaning, interaction, connectedness and significance.

On a theoretical level, this approach goes back to the work of Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff, both of whom contributed to a volume on *The Social Life of Things* (Appadurai 1986a). Appadurai's contribution is largely concerned with the creation of objects' value and their exchangeability with other objects, while Kopytoff's focus is on the life histories of objects in the “*cultural* framework with which things are classified” (Appadurai 1986b:14, original emphasis) and thus more pertinent to my discussion. He not only talks about the biographical *aspect* of *some* things—as Appadurai does—but also elaborates on culturally determined biographies of objects in general, addressing such questions as:

What sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in [an object's] “status” and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized ‘ages’ or periods in the thing's “life,” and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness? (Kopytoff 1986:66f.)

It is this notion of a “career” or a “biography” of an object that applies here. The question of whether the necklace collected by Carl Marquardt and subsequently sold to the museum in Cologne is indeed indigenously Samoan or a Fijian import to Samoa will most likely never receive a conclusive answer. What is important is that at some point during the object's life—its “career” in Kopytoff's phrasing—it was *considered* to be Samoan.

Not much can be said about Marquardt's collecting strategies and practices. He did not record when and how he acquired the objects in his collection, except that it took him “many a year” to accumulate it (Marquardt 1903:3).

However, he and his brother were intimately familiar with Samoa, its customs and ethnography. As pointed out above, it therefore seems improbable to suggest that Carl would include an object in his Samoan collection that he would identify as Fijian, or that the two of them would use this same type of necklace in posters and on a photograph of Samoan dignitaries advertising their ethnographic *Völkerschau* if it was, in their eyes, of questionable authenticity. It appears, then, that Marquardt *thought* this necklace was Samoan, and therefore that the object was understood, while in his possession, to be Samoan rather than Fijian. Equally, the three Samoan men wearing the *'ula lei* on the postcard conceivably understood the necklaces as traditional and authentically Samoan.³⁰

At the same time, during the life of the Cologne necklace, it has also been regarded as Fijian, and certainly since its reclassification as Fijian by the staff of the museum, it has consistently been seen as non-Samoan. It is still catalogued as a Fijian *wasekaseka* by Thode-Arora in the inventory catalogue published by the museum in 2001 (Thode-Arora 2001:290). Krämer, too, clearly regarded necklaces resembling the one now in Cologne as definitely Fijian rather than Samoan.

* * *

What then may be concluded about the necklace at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Cologne? While its point of origin is not known, more than likely it was acquired in Samoa, as necklaces of this type were present at this time and were being worn by Samoans. Stylistically speaking, the turn of the 20th century apparently marked a shift in their artistic production, away from the style of necklace earlier prevalent in Samoa, in which the pendants are straight, slender and short, towards the Fijian style, in which the pendants are curved, thick and long. This change in artistic form appears to have been accompanied by a move towards a preference for the Fijian-style over the Samoan-style *'ula lei*. By the 1930s, when Te Rangi Hiroa described only the Fijian style *'ula lei*, the stylistic and aesthetic change was complete.

An object's place of production or collection should not be seen as mostly or wholly determinative of its identity and significance, but rather as one aspect of its biography. As a *Samoan* artefact, the Cologne necklace signifies the exchange linkages between Fiji and Samoa, both in terms of material culture and artistic traditions. The biography of this particular necklace informs us that it was acquired and used in Samoa, while the biography of this *type* of object in the Polynesian context allows us to trace a change in artistic conventions and the interchange of ideas between the islands of Western Polynesia. The Cologne curator's reclassification of the object represents yet

another aspect of its biography: in particular, it illustrates Western attempts to “make sense” of Polynesian cultures by means of a monolithic classification system that affords little (if any) purchase on the complexities and shifting boundaries of Polynesian cultural reality.

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NOTES

1. I would like to thank Adrienne Kaeppler giving me a copy of her yet unpublished paper. Her discussion of these dialogues is predominantly concerned with contemporary art creation and the production of material culture. However, this is a continuation of her work on her classification of Polynesian material culture as running along a continuum from traditional through evolved traditional and folk art to airport art (Kaeppler 1979:180-91).
2. This article is primarily concerned with the socio-cultural implications of these necklaces’ problematic provenance. It does not consider the large number of well documented *‘ula lei* and *wasekaseka* that would serve to locate the Cologne necklace within a corpus of like items. Diagnostic features such as binding technique, the materials used for binding and the difference between slanted and straight butts of the tooth segment might prove diagnostic for an accurate attribution of individual necklaces as Samoan, Fijian or Tongan. These art-historical concerns will be taken up in a forthcoming article where I analyse a large body of sperm whale necklaces from West Polynesia that are now in museum collections.
3. Seven objects (numbers 13, 26, 49, 52, 82, 81 and 86 in Marquardt’s catalogue) were lost during the Second World War.

4. Inventory number 11217. In the catalogue recently published by Thode-Arora (2001) this item is catalogued as number 715; the sales catalogue by Marquardt (1903) lists it as number 43.
5. Generally, I refer in this article to Theodore Verhaaren's recent English translation of Augustin Krämer's work (Krämer 1995), not the German original of 1903. The pagination of the translation does not correspond to that original.
6. *'Ula lei*: illustration 16, 17, 110 and 115; *wasekaseka*: illustration 8 and 112.
7. Compared to the other "Samoan" necklaces, particularly those in illustration 115, the pendants of the *'ula lei* worn by the girl in illustration 110 are quite long.
8. In Tonga, where they are called *kahoa lei*, these whale tooth necklaces are clearly in the Fijian tradition (Kaepler 1999a:69) and it is interesting to note that the staff of the Cologne museum did not consider Tonga to be a possible place of origin for the piece purchased from Marquardt. However, as Mariner tells us, Tongan *kahoa lei* were closely related to Fiji, the style having been developed there, but they were produced in Tonga by Tongans (Mariner 1817 in Kaepler 1999a:50).
9. However, *'ula lei* were treasured and relatively rare objects for which might be substituted the blossom bud of the *pualulu* tree (*Fagraea berteroaana*), which closely resembles the slender short white pendants of an *'ula lei*. This tree, which is of the Gentian family and indigenous to most parts of the Pacific, is found on all islands of the Samoa archipelago. Its flowers, which are among the most attractive in Polynesia, are used as personal adornment when in bloom, worn behind the ear. The flowers are also used to scent coconut oil (Whistler 2004:81f.). Krämer (1994:331) early on pointed out this similarity and that necklaces adorned with this flower were often used to substitute for the more valuable *'ula lei*. There are numerous photographs illustrating this substitute necklace. The photographs attest to both the prevalent use and the similarity of these necklaces to *'ula lei*, especially when seen from a distance (as seen in Figures 3 and 7 where the *tāupou* wears an ivory *'ula lei* and the *mānaia* one made of *pualulu* tree blossoms). Today, this type of flower necklace is still appreciated as a highly esteemed adornment and used at important events.
10. Interestingly, in contrast to his musings on Fijian and Samoan types of sperm whale necklaces, Krämer does not inform the reader about the characteristics of Fijian hairstyles or why the hair of this particular woman should be regarded as fashioned in the Fijian style.
11. For further information on these photographers, see Devine Nordström (1995). My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who reminded me of some of their names.
12. For a discussion of these themes, see Devine Nordström (1995) or Lederbogen (1995).
13. See comments by Riedel (1938:218ff.) and others (Steffen-Schrade 1998:384). For the phenomenon of *Völkerschauen* in early 20th century Germany, see Bruckner (1999), Pützstück (1997) and Thode-Arora (1989). Zimmerman (2000) provides an excellent overview of the interplay of these shows and museum-based ethnography in Imperial Berlin.

14. See Quanchi (2002) for a critique of the clichés that continue to present Samoans as noble primitives living in an eternal Eden and not participating in Western domains of technology and progress, and that portray women as exotic and erotic beauties.
15. This poster was designed by Greve and printed in Leipzig (Schmidt-Linsenhoff 1986:260 no.392).
16. Note that the *gata* or Pacific boa (*Candoia bibroni*), which is indigenous to Samoa, is tan or darkly coloured, not bright green, as is the snake in the poster. The representation of the reptile in this poster further calls into question Marquardt's adherence to authenticity.
17. For detailed discussions of this rivalry and the attempts at its resolution, see Gilson (1970), and also Kennedy (1974, 1977), Hiery (1995) and Hiery and Mackenzie (1997). For a succinct overview, see Meleisea (1987:21-45).
18. Today, however, the barkcloth *lavalava* was been replaced by monochrome cloth *lavalava* with pockets called '*ie faitaga* (*taga* 'pocket')
19. Compare Te Rangi Hiroa 1930:631f.
20. These necklaces are curiously absent from most early literature. Krämer does not discuss them, although he himself collected at least one (now at the Lindenmuseum, Stuttgart, Inv. No.: 89.159) and one appears in his illustration 115, "Jewellery and plaited work" (Krämer 1995:330). Te Rangi Hiroa makes only cursory mention of them, calling them "breast ornaments" (Te Rangi Hiroa 1930:630) and referring only to the two published examples in Edge-Partington 1890-1898 vol. 1:77 and vol. 2:43.
21. For further description of *tuiga lauulu*, see Krämer 1995:332ff., Te Rangi Hiroa 1930:615ff., and most recently Mallon 2002:172ff.
22. Given the emphasis on perceived "ethnographic authenticity" in the other publications associated with the shows organised by the Marquardts, the inclusion of items of obvious European origin, such as the shirt and tie, further supports the notion that it was the Samoans who controlled the details of their representation, not Marquardt or the photographer.
23. Krämer, for example, frequently referred to this work in his description of Samoan tattooing (see Krämer 1995:76ff.)
24. See, for example, his letters to Dr Sailor, director of the Cologne museum (Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln (HAK) 614/475).
25. Marquardt would most certainly have read Krämer's work, as it was the standard book on Samoan anthropology at the time, and so should have been aware of the distinction Krämer makes there.
26. I should point out here that there are no detailed descriptions of the manufacture of either type of necklace in Samoa dating to before the 20th century.
27. I would like to thank Sean Mallon and Roger Neich for pointing out this confusion to me and verifying that the necklace on Mallon's book is identical with the one in the Auckland Museum display case where I had first encountered it. Sean Mallon and Roger Neich also graciously allowed me to use the object in this article.

28. However, because they are located in museums, where they are treated as valuables in one form or another, these “mundane” objects have in themselves achieved something of a special, treasured or sacred character.
30. As rare imported luxury goods, these necklaces might very well have gained much of their stature exactly through their association with Fiji and their foreign status. As a consequence it is possible to argue that, in spite of their use in Samoa, *‘ula lei* were ultimately always regarded as foreign, Fijian objects, even if they were produced in Samoa by local craftspeople and used by Samoans to showcase their importance and taste. However, the use of these objects would still have been culturally appropriate and legitimate within a Samoan context.

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