

Introduction: European encounters with 'primitive art' during the late nineteenth century

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The late nineteenth century witnessed Europe's engagement with art from outside the West on an unprecedented scale. From the mid-nineteenth century on, various developments brought these arts to the attention of ever broadening circles. Intensified trade, missionary activities and colonialism, together with improved means of transport and communication, resulted in foreign art works being shown in so-called ethnological museums and World Fairs, for instance, as well as being published and examined in a variety of books and journals. In the course of the second half of the nineteenth-century decorative arts from outside Europe also began to influence European designers, while during the early decades of the twentieth century sculpture from Africa, Oceania and Native America would lead to the phenomenon of artistic 'primitivism' among Europe's modernist avant-garde.

Rather than focusing on the influences that non-European arts exerted on artistic expression in the West, this special issue of the *Journal of Art Historiography* directs its attention to the reception of these arts in European scholarship and museums at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Emphasis is placed on the reception of the art forms which Europeans commonly designated as 'primitive', with special attention going to the understudied period prior to 1905. Specifically, since the term 'primitive art' was on occasion applied so broadly during the period under consideration – to denote all art forms outside the canon of Western 'classical' art – we will be concerned with that which was described as *Kunst der Naturvölker*, the 'art of natural peoples' in German. This term predominantly refers to visual art forms created for local, often ritual use in regions of the world which Western powers were colonizing, particularly in Africa, Oceania and Native America.

How were these art forms from small-scale societies outside the West interpreted and evaluated by European art historians, and how did they affect the development of art history as an academic discipline? What role did these art forms play within the fast-growing field of anthropology? How did the newly-founded ethnological museums present them to the public? How did any awareness of this art influence archaeologists who were in the process of discovering and interpreting the European Palaeolithic visual expression? More generally, within which ideological and theoretical frameworks did the European scholars of the time engage with 'primitive art'? Where did these frameworks hail from, and how did they evolve in response to intellectual and socio-political developments of the time?

In this introduction, we will first explain how and why these questions are addressed in the following contributions. Next we will sketch how, within a context of rapid imperialist expansion of European nation states, tens of thousands of

objects from overseas reached Europe, where they provoked the kind of reflection and research under consideration in this special issue.

Pre-modernist artistic recognition of objects from small-scale societies

This present publication originates in a conference held at Tilburg University (the Netherlands) on 13 and 14 January 2014 which was attended by speakers from Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands. It was organized within the context of an extraordinary chair for the anthropology of art and aesthetics endowed between 2010 and 2014 to the above University by the Treub Foundation for Scientific Research in the Tropics. Wilfried van Damme, the co-editor of this special issue, held the chair. The Treub Foundation also generously financed this conference, together with the Philosophy Department of Tilburg University's School of Humanities, to which the co-organizer and co-editor Raymond Corbey is attached.

The conference was originally meant to follow a narrow and revisionist theme. Its initial focus was the virtually unacknowledged scholarly reception of sculptural objects from Africa and Oceania *as art* during the decades preceding the so-called discovery of 'primitive art' by European modernists in the early twentieth century. According to the currently standard art historical narrative (the genealogy of which is addressed by Couttenier, this issue), the Cubists and Fauvists in France, as well as the artists belonging to *Der Blaue Reiter* and *Die Brücke* in Germany, were the first Europeans to appreciate the artistic qualities of objects from small-scale, non-European societies. These objects had previously been considered, as the story goes, to be mere curiosities or at best ethnographic documents illustrating exotic ways of life. However, recent historiographical research suggests that this oft-repeated account does not accurately reflect the history of European dealings with these objects. Whereas there is no doubt that the well-documented praise of early twentieth-century avant-garde artists represents the dominant force within the process of the Western artistic recognition of objects from Africa and Oceania, it is the first articulation of this recognition which is at stake in terms of intellectual history.¹ Provocatively posited, the much-touted 'discovery of primitive art' by Picasso *cum suis* may well be a modernist myth, a myth that has become so powerful as to eclipse any awareness of earlier forms of artistic acknowledgement of this art in Europe.

From 2009 on, the co-editor Van Damme found himself examining early studies in the anthropology of art dating from the end of the nineteenth century. These historiographical investigations followed in the wake of the rediscovery of a

¹ Robert Goldwater (*Primitivism in Modern Painting*, New York: Harper, 1938, xxii, 1) as well as Christian Kaufmann ('La Mélanésie', in *Art Océanien*, Adrienne Kappler, Christian Kaufmann, and Douglas Newton, 183-5. Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 1993) have already credited the role which late nineteenth-century ethnologists played in directing European attention to sculpture from Africa and Oceania as artistic expressions, thus paving the way for modernists' interests. Kaufmann has also pointed out that the art historian Franz Kugler did already include sculpture from Polynesia in his *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (Handbook of Art History) dating from 1842. See also Kaufmann, this issue.

ground-breaking but overlooked article on the anthropology of aesthetics published by the German scholar Ernst Grosse in 1891.² Grosse's programmatic essay is based on the assumption that human beings everywhere possess an aesthetic sensibility. He referred to cultural objects from around the world thought to express this aesthetic sensibility as 'art'. In 1894 Grosse published his book entitled *Die Anfänge der Kunst*, which was subsequently translated into many languages, including English.³ In it several preconceptions with regard to writings of this era concerning art and anthropology are belied too. A case in point is Grosse's discussion of Australian Aboriginal art. Whereas most scholars would nowadays expect a late nineteenth-century European to write extremely negatively on Aboriginal visual culture, deny it any art status and perhaps compare it to the crude attempts of European children, Grosse does nothing of the kind. He speaks of 'art' and 'artists' in Aboriginal culture, explicitly denies any link with children's art, and praises Aboriginal draughtsmanship in particular. He even states that the average Aboriginal seems more talented at drawing than the average European (for more on Grosse's analysis of Aboriginal art, see Lowish, this issue).

At the end of the nineteenth century Grosse was far from alone in treating cultural expressions from non-European small-scale societies as art. In *Die Anfänge der Kunst* he quotes numerous Europeans who likewise praised the artistic quality of the plastic and especially the graphic arts of Aborigines and other hunter-gatherer societies around the world. This was indeed the subject of his publication. A closer look at relevant writings from the final decades of the nineteenth century yields quite a number of cases in which the visual culture of other small-scale societies is praised in artistic terms. Before providing several examples hereof, two preliminary remarks are in order.

Firstly, it seems to be generally agreed upon that so-called decorative arts from small-scale societies outside the West – especially two-dimensional geometric ornaments or designs – were already artistically appreciated in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century (see also Groot, Helg, this issue). The 'primitivist revolt' of the modernist avant-garde did not concern these acclaimed ornamental arts. Instead the 'revolt' was directed at the three-dimensional figurative representations from overseas which many nineteenth-century Europeans considered, it is true, to be grotesque at best (see also Connelly, this issue). Deviating from the naturalistic canon of Western high art, these works allegedly had to await the discerning eye of early twentieth-century European modernists before they could be appreciated and validated as art. Secondly, the generally acknowledged exception of the so-called Benin bronzes, the brass sculptures and reliefs from the West African kingdom came to the attention of Europeans in 1897, and were then almost immediately valued as art (Gunsch, this issue). Julia Kelly, in

² Ernst Grosse, 'Ethnologie und Aesthetik', *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*, 15:4, 1891, 392-417. An English translation hereof has been published entitled 'Ethnology and Aesthetics', *Art in Translation*, 6:1, 2014, 9-28, trans. Claudia Hopkins, with an introduction by Wilfried van Damme (see also the latter's 'Ernst Grosse and the Birth of the Anthropology of Aesthetics', *Anthropos*, 107:2, 2012, 497-509).

³ Grosse, *Die Anfänge der Kunst*. Freiburg i. B.: J. C. B. Mohr; *The Beginnings of Art*, trans. Frederick Starr, New York: Appleton, 1897.

her contribution to this issue, suggests that much the same occurred at the end of the nineteenth century with the figurative objects from Dahomey, another West African kingdom.

The examples presented below illustrate the pre-modernist recognition of artistic value in 'primitive' objects; they do not concern two-dimensional ornaments from small-scale societies and acclaimed works of royal art from Africa, but deal with figurative wood sculpture in the round. Thus, Felix von Luschan, the German anthropologist who was among the first to discuss the works from Benin in artistic terms, also presented favourable comments regarding the artistry found in sculpted objects from Melanesia. In 1896 Von Luschan, then the curator at the Berlin Museum of Ethnology discusses, for example, a three-dimensional zoomorphic sculpture attached to a spear-thrower from northern New Guinea. He greatly praises its artistic qualities, concluding that the figure represents 'a high point in the Melanesian art of carving, which is justly admired so much'.⁴ This remark betrays that artistic admiration for Melanesian sculpture must at this moment have been widely shared in at least certain circles in Europe.

Several interesting developments can be noted with regard to Europe of this period, too, in relation to the labeling, conceptualizing, and disciplinary framing of this art, rather than simply admiration and appraisal. In 1890, for example, the Austrian scholar Alois Hein published a book entitled *Die bildende Künste bei den Dayaks auf Borneo*, 'The Visual Arts of the Dayak on Borneo', subtitled his study *Ein Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kunstgeschichte*, 'A Contribution to the General History of Art'.⁵ Based on museum collections and ethnographic literature, Hein starts with a discussion of the architecture and three-dimensional figurative sculpture of the Dayak, before then turning to what may be called the decorative arts of the Dayak. (However, it may be mentioned here that Hein considered ornaments to be highly symbolic, a view not unusual in the field of ethnology).

Similarly, Lindor Serrurier, curator and then director of the Leiden ethnological museum, published an article on *korwar* figures from New Guinea in 1898, giving it the subtitle 'Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der bildenden Kunst', 'A Contribution to the History of the Visual Arts'.⁶ He analyses the design of these three-dimensional anthropomorphic figures used in the local ancestor cult, suggesting the existence of various style regions in the northwestern part of New Guinea. Conceiving his analysis as an exercise in art history, Serrurier clearly considered *korwar* figures as belonging to the category of art.⁷ The adopting of the

⁴ '... die mit Recht so bewunderte Schnitzkunst der Melanesier feiert hier ihre schönsten Triumphe'; Felix von Luschan, 'Das Wurfholz in Neu-Holland und in Ozeanien', in Rudolf Virchow et al., *Festschrift für Adolf Bastian zu seinem 70. Geburtstage*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen), 1896, 149.

⁵ Alois Raimund Hein, *Die bildende Künste bei den Dayaks auf Borneo. Ein Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kunstgeschichte*, Wien: Alfred Hölder, 1890.

⁶ Lindor Serrurier, 'Korware oder Ahnenbilder Neu-Guinea's. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der bildenden Kunst', *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 40, 1898, 287-316.

⁷ Serrurier had in 1888 already published an essay in Dutch on a so-called double mask from Cabinda (West-Central Africa) that had recently arrived in the Leiden museum, complete with its feather headdress and feather cloak. The discussion of the mask is ethnographical

label 'art' in this and related contexts raises several questions and issues. For example, which criteria were explicitly or implicitly applied in order to designate an object as art? One is reminded here of current notions concerning the 'invention of primitive art', something which is now and again analysed as Western 'conceptual imperialism'. Suffice it here to observe that examinations into these topics will have to extend back to the era pre-dating the advent of 'artistic primitivism' in the course of the early twentieth century.

As for Africa, the German ethnologist Leo Frobenius, to present but a single example, published an article in 1897 entitled 'Die bildende Kunst der Afrikaner', or 'African Visual Arts'.⁸ In it he discusses the rendition of the human form in African sculpture, starting his exposition with three-dimensional 'ancestor figures' and other sculptures in the round, before analyzing the representation of the human form in a two-dimensional expression – all this under the heading of 'art'. Maarten Couttenier's essay published in the present *Journal of Art Historiography's* special issue provides us with numerous examples of the late nineteenth-century aesthetic appreciation of African objects and their framing as art in Europe, with an emphasis on Belgium; Christian Kaufmann's contribution does the same for artifacts from Oceania.

Grosse thus appears to have been drawing on a more widely shared sentiment, at least in the world of ethnology, when he wrote in 1894:

[T]here is no excuse whatever in our time for a student who constructs theories of art without recognizing that European art is not the only art. An ethnological museum is open in nearly every large city; a constantly expanding literature carries the knowledge of the productions of foreign tribes by description and picture into the widest circles, and yet the science of art remains as it was. It can, however, no longer ignore ethnological material unless it wishes to ignore it.⁹

The scope of the Tilburg conference quickly widened beyond its initial impetus, which was to challenge entrenched claims that avant-garde artists were the first to open European eyes to the artistic qualities of 'primitive' objects. This special issue, too, addresses a wider canvas of European receptions of artistic objects from Africa, Oceania and Native America during the years before and after 1900, within art history, anthropology, and other academic fields. What role did these objects play within theories on art at the turn of the previous century (Basu, Déléage, De Muer, Helg, Leeb)? How were these artifacts approached by cultural outsiders carrying out local research (Déléage, Kaufmann, Mersmann)? What role did the

but Serrurier does qualify the work as *fraai*, 'fine-looking', 'beautiful'. Moreover, he or the editor of the journal in question – the Leiden curator J. D. E. Schmeltz – saw to it that the polychrome mask, including the above accessories, was illustrated in full colour; Lindor Serrurier, 'Dubbel masker met veeren kleed uit Cabinda', *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 1, 1888, 154-9.

⁸ Leo Frobenius, 'Die bildende Kunst der Afrikaner', *Mittheilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft Wien*, 27, 1897, 1-17.

⁹ Grosse, *The Beginnings of Art*, 20-1.

collecting activities and the influential religious discourse of Christian missionaries play (Corbey & Weener)? And what might one think of the brisk trade in these objects (Biro, Kaufmann, see also below, this introduction)? Discussions also focus on (a) the reception of non-European ornaments and other forms of design (Groot), (b) royal sculptures (Gunsch, Kelly), and (c) the parallels drawn between 'primitive art' from outside the West and Palaeolithic art being discovered in Europe (Moro Abadía). The European nineteenth-century intellectual climate is examined, specifically with respect to more general approaches to 'non-classical' art (Connelly) and the European 'colonial gaze' (Welten). Finally, attention is paid to the consequences of the early European reception of 'primitive art', in relation to Western dealings with non-European art later on in the twentieth century (Phillips).

As a preamble to all this, we now conclude this introduction with a brief survey on how objects from small-scale societies outside the West arrived in Europe in the first place.

Ethnographics in motion

Three reports composed by museum curators who undertook independent 'inspection journeys' in the late nineteenth century to Western museums which housed ethnographic objects offer an interesting view of institutional dealings with 'primitive art,' during that era of rapid imperial expansion. The Danish ethnologist Kristian Bahnson visited museums in Germany, Austria and Italy 1887. In 1895 Johann D.E. Schmeltz, curator of 's Rijks Ethnographisch Museum (Leiden, the Netherlands) recorded inventories of institutional collections not only in the three countries mentioned above, but also in the Netherlands, England, France, Switzerland and Italy. William Brigham, botanist and the first curator at the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Hawaii toured a number of museums in Europe, Australia and the USA in 1897.¹⁰ Together these three quite detailed inventories dramatically illustrate the rapid accumulation of ethnographics during the second half of the nineteenth century through an ever more systematic collecting by museums. These collections, as well as the publications and exhibitions they sparked off, brought ritual and other art originating from small-scale indigenous societies in newly acquired overseas territories to the attention of European scholars in a more emphatic manner than ever before. Nascent systematic ethnological and art historical appreciations of the category of objects under discussion in the present special issue both drove, and were driven by, an unprecedented accumulation of ethnographics during the age of empire.

The majority of the museums which these three scholars visited had only recently been founded, at the onset of European colonial expansion in Africa and Oceania. Moreover, at the time of the inspection journeys, these museums already held thousands of objects each, perhaps even more. Earlier in the century these

¹⁰ Kristian Bahnson, 'Über ethnographische Museen', *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 18, 1888, 109-64; J. D. E. Schmeltz, *Ethnographische musea in Midden-Europa*, Leiden: Brill, 1896. William Tufts Brigham, 'Report of a Journey Around the World Undertaken to Examine Various Ethnological Collections', *Occasional Papers of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum*, 1, 1898, 1-72.

objects had usually been cast as curios, trophies, relics or idols, and had hardly been paid any attention to, let alone documented carefully. Now, however, they came to be seen as scientific data - illustrating the ascent from savageness to civilisation or, alternatively, the geographic diffusion of cultural traits - and, as mentioned, in quite a few cases, as art.

Schmeltz concurred with Adolf Bastian, the first director of the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde founded in Berlin in 1873. The former was one of the many who expressed their awareness that remnants of small-scale cultural traditions had to be safeguarded before they would be lost forever due to Western expansion. 'From all corners came reactions to the voice of Professor Bastian', Schmeltz wrote in his report, 'who tirelessly argued that while European civilisation was penetrating the farthest corners of the planet as many remnants of the original civilisation had to be collected'.¹¹ By the early 1880s the above Berlin museum already housed approximately 10,000 objects in its depots, mainly from Central Africa. Bastian turned out to be an effective fundraiser; he was supported by German citizens in a spirit of, as Glenn Penny writes, 'scientific enthusiasm and civic self-promotion [which] provided the impetus, and later the motor, for the creation and support of ethnographic museums ... regarded as vehicles for gaining prestige and often international recognition'.¹²

Scientific expeditions constituted one of the most effective ways of obtaining ethnographics. They were by and large organized by learned societies concerned with anthropology, ethnology, geography, natural history. These came into being or experienced a sudden growth at the same time and for the same reasons as the museums and the new discipline of ethnology they were closely connected to. The three travelling museum officials gratefully discuss this subject. For example, the recently opened Museo Nazionale di Antropologia e Etnologia (Florence) and the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico (Rome) founded in 1875 by Luigi Pigorini, shared the majority of the objects which the Italian naturalist Luigi d'Albertis had collected during his expeditions up the Fly River in New Guinea. The Übersee-Museum Bremen benefited from an expedition which the Geographische Gesellschaft (Bremen) financed. It led the brothers Dr Aurel and Dr Arthur Krause, the field workers, to northeast Siberia and the west coast of Canada in 1881 and 1882. Various European institutions profited from the Dutch anthropologist Herman ten Kate's sojourn among the native peoples of the south-western part of North America during the early 1880s. At about the same time, as a further example, ethnographic information acquired by Pierre Savornan de Brazza in the course of his third expedition to Central Africa entered the Paris Musée d'Ethnographie. Twenty years later, these items played a major role within the development of French artistic modernism. Numerous ethnographic objects collected during such overseas expeditions during the late nineteenth century were exhibited at World Fairs and colonial exhibitions, offering yet another destination for ethnographic objects from the colonies, and a setting which fostered a fascination for the 'primitive'.

¹¹ Schmeltz, *Ethnographische musea*, 75.

¹² Glenn Penny, 'Municipal Displays. Civic Self-promotion and the Development of German Ethnographic Museums, 1870-1914', *Social Anthropology*, 6, 1998, 157-68, 158.

A remarkable early museum-*cum*-commercial gallery which included ethnographic objects (and items of natural history) from the western Pacific was the privately sponsored Museum Godeffroy in Hamburg. It existed between 1861 and 1885, having been founded by the trading company Joh. Ces. Godeffroy & Sohn (which was active in German Melanesia, mainly trading copra (cf. Kaufmann, this issue)). The afore-mentioned Johann D.E. Schmeltz officiated as its curator for 20 years, prior to being appointed in Leiden. As for its acquisitions, the museum benefited from this family's excellent trade contacts. It also paid scientifically-trained explorers to collect in the field. When it had to close its doors in 1885 the majority of its extensive, well documented collection of 3,000 objects was purchased by the museums of ethnography in Hamburg, Leipzig and Leiden.

Museums also acquired a wealth of material from independent scholars e.g., Alphonse Pinart. During the early 1870s this French linguist-*cum*-ethnologist collected a spectacular set of Alaskan Inuit masks, now housed at museums in Boulogne-sur-Mer and Paris. Another example hereof is the large collection from the (vicinity of) the isle of Nias (Dutch East Indies) which the Museo di Storia Naturale dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze acquired through Elio Modigliani, the Italian anthropologist-*cum*-naturalist, in 1886. At that time the products of 'natural peoples' were often seen as part of natural history. Indeed quite a number of collections comprising ethnographic objects came into being in museums of natural history. Universities were also engaged in developing collections for educational purposes, as in the case of the University of Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany), where Schmeltz met its curator, Ernst Grosse.¹³

Gifts from European armchair collectors constituted another source of ethnographic items. For example, over 3,000 such objects from mainly African colonies, brought together by the French physician Jules Lhomme who resided at La Rochefoucauld between 1880 and 1930, are now in the Musée d'Angoulême. Moreover, a large quantity was acquired by means of individual Europeans in or from the colonies: planters, traders, militaries, physicians, sailors, missionaries, diplomats, officials and travellers. For example, the Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde (founded in 1885 at Rotterdam) profited from the port's diplomatic, commercial and missionary connections, receiving or purchasing gifts from almost all the above-mentioned categories of individuals. One such acquisition consisted of a fine collection of Javanese batik cloth, collected and donated by Dr. E. van Rijckevorsel in 1877. An important collection of Oceanic art, brought together during three decades by a wholesale jeweller named Bertin, was sold at an auction held in Paris in March 1887. Nine years earlier, these items had already been exhibited at the Palais du Trocadéro in Paris.

The late nineteenth-century scramble for ethnographic items also encouraged their commodification and commercialisation. Moreover, large German trading companies (e.g. the afore-mentioned Joh. Ces. Godeffroy & Sohn, the Neuguinea-Kompagnie, the Hernalshaus Kompanie) were all active within German territories in Melanesia (see Kaufmann, this issue). They soon discovered they could make healthy additional profits by trading indigenous artefacts in bulk. Notably in

¹³ Schmeltz, *Ethnographische musea*, 39. On Grosse, see above, and Lowish, Leeb, this issue.

Germany and England the first full time dealers in 'primitive art' established themselves, supplying museums and private collectors with items of ethnographic significance. Objects furnished by Umlauff Naturalienhandlung & Museum in Hamburg, active during several generations from the 1860s on, are now kept in museums all over the world. A large number of these items are considered masterpieces. W.D. Webster, active in London between around 1890 and 1913, was probably the first to produce beautifully illustrated sales catalogues describing 'ethnographical specimens'. The majority of his stock had been acquired while travelling through England, from private collectors, small auctions, antique shops and markets. In 1896 Emile Heyman was one of the first to open a gallery containing *curiosités* and *armes de sauvages* in Paris (see Biro, this issue, on Joseph Brummer, another Paris-based dealer who started his gallery several years later). The equally successful Antwerp-based dealer in Congolese art, Henri Pareyn, had acquired the largest part of his stock in the city's port between the 1890s and the 1920s. After his death in 1928 his spectacular private collection reached unprecedented prices at a legendary auction in Antwerp. In fact, these dealers were often real aficionados with private collections.

The imperial expansion during the second half of the nineteenth century was accompanied by frantic missionary efforts. Many Roman Catholic congregations and Protestant missionary societies were especially created for this purpose. Missionaries rapidly became yet another channel through which considerable numbers of ethnographic items reached Europe (see Corbey & Weener, this issue). The often rather negative view of indigenous ritual art as idols and fetishes in missionary propaganda contributed largely to the broader European appreciation of such objects.¹⁴ Generally speaking, the missionaries collected not because of any scientific interest in the objects as such, but in order to sell, display as trophies, and apply them in propaganda and tuition. In 1925 Pope Pius XI solicited ethnographic objects from dioceses, missions and congregations from all over the world for the elaborate World Missionary Exhibition in the Vatican. Subsequently he received tens of thousands of such objects, giving us an indication of the vast quantities that had by then reached Europe through missionary channels. The majority hereof were subsequently housed in the recently founded Vatican Ethnological Missionary Museum, next to the ethnographic collections which the Propaganda Fide had acquired over several centuries.

An early example of ethnographics travelling from overseas territories through missionary networks to Western metropolitan cities (where their reception was often negative) is an exhibition and sale organised in London by the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1851. It consisted of various types of objects from the Pacific region including 'idols' from Fiji and Tonga. An image in the *Illustrated London News* depicts a large hall crammed full of objects.¹⁵ Another early example hereof is the collection acquired by the Protestant Basler Mission (Basel, Switzerland), which according to a printed catalogue counted 1,558 objects in as early as 1862. In 1887, at

¹⁴ Karen Jacobs, Chantal Knowles & Chris Wingfield, *Trophies, Relics and Curios? Missionary Heritage from Africa and the Pacific*, Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2015.

¹⁵ Steven Hooper, 'Illustration of an Exhibition and Sale at the Wesleyan Centenary Hall, United Kingdom', in Jacobs, Knowles & Wingfield, *Trophies, Relics and Curios*, 45-54.

the request of Adolf Bastian (director of the Berlin museum of ethnology at the time), the Basler Mission had circulated detailed instructions on collecting for this museum among its personnel active in various missionary fields.¹⁶ Such wish lists, as issued by curators, were not unusual (Mersmann, this issue). Another example of Protestant contributions to ethnological collections comprises several loans and gifts consisting of indigenous ritual art from the Netherlands East Indies, presented by Dutch missionary societies to the afore-mentioned Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde in Rotterdam (Corbey & Weener, this issue) from the 1880s on. The Nederlandsche Zendings Vereeniging donated a set of power figures ('nail fetishes') from the Lower Congo in 1894.

The foregoing survey illustrates how, within a setting of imperial expansion, tens of thousands of objects from the colonies reached western metropolitan cities, while moving through various interconnected networks. Here, in museums, learned societies and scholarly disciplines, they sparked off the innovative research and reflections under consideration in the contributions to the present special issue.

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¹⁶ Peter Valentin, 'Eine völkerkundliche Sammlung in Basel. Zur Geschichte des Missionsmuseums', *Regio Basiliensis*, 20, 1978, 213-20.