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COCONUTS AND ROSARIES: MATERIALITY IN THE CATHOLIC CHRISTIANISATION OF THE TUAMOTU ARCHIPELAGO (FRENCH POLYNESIA)

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ABSTRACT: The Christianisation of the Tuamotu Archipelago, a large group of atolls lying between the Society and Marquesas archipelagos, was the subject of intense rivalry between several Christian denominations. This article focuses on the evangelistic practices of the Catholic missionaries of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, who settled there in 1849 after achieving great success in the Gambier Islands. In the Tuamotus, Catholic evangelisation relied on material practices (rituals, exchanges, construction of churches and secular buildings, etc.) and imported objects (rosaries, calico, medals, etc.), which were often shipped there with great difficulty. The Fathers' accounts provide valuable insights into both the changes in material culture and social organisation that occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century and the processes of reconstruction, distortion or denial of imported practices or values—to which the missionaries also had to adapt.

Keywords: Catholic missionaries, material practices, post-conversion strategies, missionary enterprises, Picpus Fathers, Tuamotu Archipelago, French Polynesia

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> I forgot to ask your Excellency to request a few thuribles. Ceremonies are more effective than grand speeches with the Indians.
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> —Clair Fouqué, letter to Ferréol Loubat, Temarie, 24 March 1851

The Tuamotu or Pa'umotu Archipelago is one of the five that constitute French Polynesia. Comprising 77 atolls scattered over more than 600,000 km^2, it differs from the other groups by the total absence of high volcanic islands. European navigators sailed through the Tuamotus as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but most of the islands remained rarely visited even after the establishment in Tahiti of the French Protectorate in 1842. This can be explained by a very disparate distribution of market-worthy resources,[1] the dangers of navigation in these islands and the hostility displayed by some communities. As a consequence, historical sources providing information on these societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are also much less abundant than for other areas of the cultural historical region of Eastern Polynesia, such as the Society Islands. The first

converted Christians were Paʻumotu (the native inhabitants of the Tuamotu islands) who had settled in the Society Islands in the early nineteenth century, following the wars between Anaa (or, in Paʻumotuan, Ganā) and other western and central Tuamotu atolls (Moerenhout 1837). Polynesians trained by Protestant missionaries (Davies 1961: 94; Ellis 1831, III: 305–6) started to propagate Christianity in the Tuamotus from 1817 (Gunson 1969: 74). On the Catholic side, the missionaries of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (CSH)[2]—also named Picpus Fathers because their first house was on Picpus Street in Paris—founded a first mission in Faaite (or Fāite) in 1849, encouraged by their success in the Gambier Islands since 1834.[3] According to Cyrille Mérian (1928–1933: 8), "word of the successes won by the Mormon and Protestant ministers provoked a burning desire in Catholic missionaries to devote themselves as well". However, the task was not easy in the atolls of Faaite, Fakarava and Anaa, which they targeted first, as they faced competition from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS, or Mormons)[4] and encountered fierce hostility toward the French administration. In the Tuamotus, the Fathers also had to face material conditions that were more precarious and constraining than anywhere else in French Polynesia: food resources were not as abundant and varied as in Tahiti or the Marquesas, and the remoteness of the Tuamotus meant long, constant and hazardous sea travel. The Paʻumotu themselves were seen as victims on multiple levels: of pagan misdirection, Mormon "heresy", the pearl-shell sellers' cupidity, the indifference of the French colonial rule, and the "extreme misery" of the environment, "without mountains, without vegetation, without green", offering "nothing but sand and gravel" (Fierens 1877a, 1884). In the 1860s, missionaries based in the Gambier Islands and Anaa endeavoured to evangelise, with their catechists, the last "wild" islands of the remote north and east and to reconvert populations "lost" to the LDS, for instance in Hao and Amanu (Fierens 1866c; Montiton 1869: 2, 21–22). The conversion phase was completed in the early 1880s when Tematangi (or Tematagi) was reputedly the last pagan atoll to be converted by the Picpus Fathers (*Les Missions Catholiques* 1890); it was followed by an equally difficult time in stabilising and maintaining what had been achieved.

This paper will focus on the role given to objects and material actions over five decades of Catholic missionisation (1849–1900) in a region considered, from the start, as particularly destitute, abandoned and primitive. Christian missionaries in Oceania were active collectors of artefacts, which could be famously destroyed when they were representative of paganism but also kept as trophies demonstrating victory of the Christian God, or for scientific purposes (Delbos 2011: 33–34, 39–40; Gardner 2000; Hooper 2006: 27). Numerous studies have looked at the historical dynamics of collecting and exchange and at the objects brought back from the mission

lands, sometimes to be displayed in exhibitions or museums showcasing the success of missionary organisations.[5] The Picpus Fathers contributed to knowledge about Oceanic material worlds by bringing back to Europe descriptions, images and objects, some extremely rare—as in the case of the carved *rongorongo* tablets of Rapa Nui, collected and studied by Étienne Jaussen (Ropiteau 1935). However, this paper will not focus on the activity and objectives of such collections; rather, it will examine the introduction into the Tuamotus of artefacts, materials and architectural concepts that were instrumental in the Catholic missionary enterprise. The missionaries to the Tuamotus imported from Tahiti and Europe numerous food items, tools and religious objects for a range of aims, in particular to develop relationships with the islanders and obtain services in exchange, attract converts and resist the influence of rival religious groups, especially the LDS and the Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (RLDS, or Sanito Church). They relied heavily on rituals and material symbols, while seeking to transform the existing material world; for instance, they tried to put in place permanent modes of settlement and encourage new economic practices. While these strategies proved successful in some places and in certain periods, the missionaries also had to face setbacks and unexpected consequences; thus their accounts record how the new modes of life and of thought imported into the Tuamotus were diversely appropriated, rejected or denied.[6]

DAILY SURVIVAL AND COMPETITION

When they arrived in 1851 at the Mormon "fortress" that was Anaa (Terlyn 1900), the Catholic missionaries were confronted by virulent opposition from a part of the population that was hostile to "papism". Evangelisation began within a tense and defiant atmosphere that reached a head in November 1852, when the sergeant Charles Viry was assassinated while two missionaries from Anaa were violently beaten, with one, Clair Fouqué, left for dead (Loubat 1852; also Newbury 1980: 139–40). Competition from other religious groups thus became, from the start, one of the central themes evoked in the letters and reports sent to "His Excellency", the Bishop of Tahiti, and to the Congregation's headquarters. The missionaries quickly faced another persistent problem: that of managing the importation of resources, tools and building materials, despite distance, high costs and the unreliability of the maritime links. First of all, the Fathers imported a significant portion of their food supplies. Salted pork, hardtack, flour, lentils and beans supplemented or replaced local foods, which were considered scarce, unsavoury or even dangerous for unaccustomed visitors (Fouqué 1849a). Fresh foods like coconuts and fish were still offered or traded by inhabitants (Fouqué 1849b; Mérian 1928–1933: 25). It is probable that the political tensions of the early

1850s only reinforced the Fathers' determination to become as independent as possible from the food supplies produced or controlled by the Pa'umotu. However, those who were posted for several months on atolls that were rarely or never provisioned by commercial ships were forced to depend on the islanders' resources and skills far more than they wished; they survived on tridacna clams, coconuts, pandanus and, in the best of times, turtle (Fierens 1884: 386; Montiton 1873: 280, 371).

Interisland transport was crucial as the Fathers were unwilling to be dependent on merchant schooners and wanted to follow the inhabitants in their continuous travels. For this reason, they also sought to obtain watercrafts and materials to conduct maintenance and repairs on the islands (Fouqué 1850c). Their letters also mentioned shipments of clothing and other everyday items for their own use (soutanes, shoes, stockings, hats, European china, newspapers, matches, calendars, soap, etc.), or contained pressing requests for such things. For the Fathers, it was as much about securing the minimum needed to lead a "decent" life, by the standards of the time, as about successfully abiding by their congregation's rules and reconstituting a familiar environment within the "painful apostolate" of the Tuamotus. Despite their devotion, many amongst the Fathers went through episodes of intense discouragement because of the lack of personnel, apostasies, hardships and physical weariness. Although surrounded by Polynesians, they considered themselves alone, longing for confession and the companionship of their peers. Familiar objects could hence have been a source of solace and of protection against despair and insanity. Such were the letters received from the hierarchy, or from fellow missionaries on other postings, whose news, encouragements and instructions were eagerly awaited all year round. But the most awaited items were undoubtedly the religious ones, which were necessary to administer sacraments, catechise proselytes and conduct the many devotions of the Catholic religion. These had to be replaced regularly, being used, stolen or even lost at sea, e.g., while landing on one of the many closed atolls. During their trips from one island to another, the Fathers transported religious candles, altar stones, host moulds, crucifixes, rosaries and other devices often seen as indispensable and without substitute—according to the LDS missionary James S. Brown (1900: 210), the priests in Anaa had as many "things" as "two or three men could carry" for a "meeting". For Germain Fierens, for instance, it was inconceivable to celebrate mass without Eucharistic wine (1866a). A similar attitude seems to have existed amongst the Marist Fathers in Sāmoa who, according to Andrew Hamilton (1998: 173), were "not prepared to go as far as their Protestant rivals in adapting the eucharist to *fa'a Samoa* ['the Sāmoan way']".

Vital, comforting and indispensable to their ecclesiastic ministry, the objects surrounding the Fathers also helped to express their identity and establish their influence. In fact, they needed both to be recognised as men of God and spiritual guides and to distinguish themselves from the white traders, beachcombers and castaways who passed through these islands and whom they usually secretly despised. To position the priest on "a rank that obliged respect for his character" (Fouqué 1851a), one had to keep the soutane, even for physical work under a blazing sun (Fierens 1877a) or during sea voyages, and to maintain body and clothing in a clean state (Fouqué 1851b). Besides, the missionaries' status and mission were expressed, to some extent, through physical distancing. In Napuka, Albert Montiton greeted the natives "with his voice and hand" instead of rubbing noses like his catechist (1869). Fierens (1871), whom the same islanders were eager to see and touch, tried to keep his distance as a *tagata raka* 'sacred man'. It is also apparent that the Fathers avoided as much as possible living in the natives' homes, and one of their first concerns when evangelising a community was to find "adequate housing" for themselves and for God (i.e., by building a chapel or church; Fierens 1878). The regulations which were in use in the Vicariate of Tahiti in 1874 ("Ensemble des règlements" 1874) provided "as a precaution" that a missionary should always stay or travel with "a catechist or a child who will be his guardian angel"—but accounts suggest that at least some stayed on their own while in the Tuamotus. Importantly, such *modus operandi* did not preclude compassion or interest for those who, for Fierens, were above all "poor" people that the "Devil kept chained". According to Mérian, Montiton, who had quickly mastered both Tahitian and Pa'umotuan, was "very loved by all" (1928–1933: 137) and became the confidant of his followers, from whom he also gathered oral traditions. In fact, missionisation involved having to strike a delicate equilibrium: the Fathers had to live amongst the natives in order to be listened to and appreciated, all the while fostering a distinction between themselves and those that they had come to turn into "enlightened Catholics" (Montiton 1856a).

Without necessarily showing more empathy towards indigenous beliefs and practices, the first LDS missionaries were presumably more willing to live in close physical proximity with the natives, on whom they depended for their food and shelter, and to adapt their practices to what existed locally (see Ellsworth 1959: 20; Hendrix-Komoto 2015: 90; on LDS missionaries and how they related to Polynesian cultures, see also Barber 2015). Benjamin Grouard had breakfast on the ground and ate with his fingers shortly after first arriving in Anaa in 1845, used coconut milk and sprouts for the celebration of the Eucharist, travelled in a local double-hulled canoe (1843–1846: 84–86, 103, 139) and married the "prettiest and best girl in the island",

which made a "commotion" (Pratt 1843–1852, April 1846). Such facts could contribute to the LDS's success, even if certain much-cherished local habits, like dancing and smoking, were still condemned (Pratt 1843–1852, 19 July 1846). The LDS missionaries were also able to address central desires and preoccupations of the islanders by practising rituals of healing and exorcism (Brown 1900: 215; Grouard 1843–1846: 110) and by distributing titles and distinctions (Pratt 1843–1852, 1 November 1846). The Catholics accused them of deceiving the Pa'umotu by exploiting existing superstitions and fears (see Montiton 1856a: 7–8) but also of shamelessly taking advantage of their resources.[7] This opinion possibly reinforced the Picpus Fathers' desire to prove their philanthropic engagement by minimising their material reliance on their followers (see Hodée 1983: 346). Thus, preserving some material autonomy thanks to shipments of equipment and food supplies was not only a measure of security and a form of comfort but also a political necessity: "Because they [LDS rivals] pretend to be apostles without purse and without money, they are starting to be viewed as *teimaha* ['ponderous'], a burden for the disciples. Our people who start to calculate will see that they have nothing to lose with our missionaries" (Fouqué 1850b: 2).

Other types of items became useful in the fight against the LDS's influence. Some Picpus Fathers requested Bibles to help them debate theological points with the ministers; others asked for medications, for charity reasons but also to keep up with the competition on healing work. In 1862, for instance, Fierens (1862) asked for a shipment of homeopathic remedies, explaining: "My reputation here is complete, so much so that the Mormons do not talk about performing miracles anymore, they all come to me themselves to be cured." Even if the Catholics relied on the importing of objects and commodities to survive and succeed, their hopes were frequently dashed, either because the letters never reached their destination or because excessively specific or costly requests were impossible to satisfy, or again because the much-awaited items arrived unusable after a journey at sea. Thus, their adaptability should not be underestimated, in particular with regard to their own comfort. While Grouard (1843–1846: 154) accepted to have the ground as "[his] table, the leaves of a tree [as his] dishes, and [his] fingers … as knife and fork" since "all these things … are for the gospel's sake", some Catholic missionaries even felt a sense of moral satisfaction in the fact that they lived "in the poverty of Christ". Among many instances, Montiton had to sleep in an old abandoned hut open to the wind and rain, while in Napuka Fierens had to ration his food and consume rotten flour. The missionaries of the eastern atolls, faced with the most remote conditions, more than any others had to learn to make do with what was there and, eventually, express their specific status and purpose in ways other than through material culture—for instance by avoiding taking part in non-Catholic daily activities.

EDIFY AND DAZZLE THROUGH "EXPRESSIVE BEAUTIES"

If the CSH missionaries could rely on Christian reinterpretations of local myths (see Montiton 1874 for examples) or on the Christianisation of existing rituals to promote Catholicism in the Tuamotus, there is little information as to how such means were implemented (or not) in daily life. On the other hand, there is abundant firsthand data on the functions that they gave to their religious buildings and the ceremonies that took place there. Although the Picpus Fathers sometimes had to celebrate mass in simple private homes (Loubat 1857), they rapidly endeavoured to build their own churches, using perishable materials to start with if necessary, and then using durable materials as soon as feasible[8] (Fig. 1). These constructions tended to reproduce forms and organising principles imported from Europe, but the Fathers learned to experiment and adapt to resources available *in situ*—such as coral, from which they extracted lime, following a technique developed in Mangareva. For these structures, the Fathers imported building materials, design plans, architecture handbooks and tools; they requested the help of craftsmen trained in the Gambiers or of lay brothers known for their building skills (Fouqué 1852d; Loubat 1857). Moreover, they were determined to endow the churches with all the liturgical utensils, furniture

Figure 1. Church with priest in doorway, Kaukura, 1874. Museum of Tahiti and the Islands (D2008 2-48).

elements and adornments they saw as crucial to the dignity of rituals. A letter from 1853, for instance, requested the shipment of crucifixes, sacred stones, adornments in colourful silk, chalices, albs for the holy days, vials of holy oil, a harmonium and other items (Fouqué 1853). Some priests hesitated to organise certain rites if they did not possess what was needed to "brighten them up". The difficulty in obtaining specific items could lead to the utilisation of substitutes, for instance flowers to replace candles and pandanus mats to adorn the church's steps and floor (Pépin 1851), but those were generally perceived as makeshift measures.

The Picpus Fathers' determination to erect places of worship may find its roots in a characteristic of the Congregation and its spiritual tradition: namely, according to Paul Hodée, the importance given to Eucharistic adoration (1983: 248–50, 329). Still, the multiplicity and beauty of the churches were also a necessity for evangelisation: the religious buildings had to celebrate the glory of God all the while moving the hearts and imagination of the indigenous people. In this civilisation of ephemeral materiality, where indigenous coral *marae* 'temples' did not always stand up to the assaults of waves and time, the Fathers endeavoured to create stable material landmarks, also attracting the populations via the beauty of the decorations and the pomp of the ceremonies. Montiton (1856: 391) evoked the care given "in decorating our chapel, so as to excite the curiosity of the infidels and the enthusiasm of our neophytes". For his part, Fouqué (1852c) insisted on the importance of maintaining "the external pomp of the cult": "fake flowers, ornaments, chandelier, small organs, etc.: the superficial and dull character of our Indians needs to be overexcited by a few objects that strike the senses." According to common opinion, nothing was more beneficial to the mission than a rite conducted with grandeur, following the tradition, and if possible in the presence of a religious authority of a higher rank, such as the Bishop of Tahiti. "The ceremonies are conducted with dignity", indicated Ferréol Loubat (1857) to a brother in 1857; "If, on this Easter Day, you would have been amongst us, you would have believed yourself in Paris and not in a dreadful Paumotu island" (see also Montiton 1856b). For Montiton, the issue at hand was to successfully enable the Pa'umotu to access the mystery of faith through objects and rites. The churches, their decorations and the objects exhibited or manipulated during ceremonies constituted a path towards the "hidden God": they had to dazzle, give the experience of the divine presence, bring the population to Catholicism through emotion and the senses. He wrote (1856: 392):

> Now, this powerful lever, or better, these dove's wings that the royal prophet asked for so as to rise up to God, the Indian will find them, of this we are utterly convinced, in the pomp and expressive beauties of the Catholic cult, which, by striking the senses first, will imperceptibly affect his soul, lifting

> it up, freeing it from the materiality in which it is somehow buried,[9] and revealing to it another world hitherto unknown.

The success of such a strategy remains difficult to evaluate. Testimonies suggest that the newly erected churches could prompt admiration and pride in the districts, and that inaugural ceremonies associating feasts with Christian spirituality could attract a large attendance, including "heretics" (Montiton 1856b; Pépin 1851: 49). Yet, the Fathers often despaired that the solemnities they so cherished only generated indifference or mockery despite the material means deployed, especially in those islands with strong Mormon influence (Montiton 1856a). In addition to a deep-seated belief in the efficacy of objects, images and rituals, it needs to be remembered that the Fathers' efforts were carried out within the context of a continuous fight against this religious group. Hence, the stone-made churches, as stable and durable as the Fathers' progresses were fragile and challenged, the calvaries, the monumental crosses, all represented concrete testimonies of the Catholic presence, visual reminders of the victories achieved. Their whiteness, contrasting with the grey stone of the marae coral masses, and their proportions made them immediately noticeable to passing vessels. The multiplication of churches was also a practical necessity. According to Marie-Joseph Verdier (1885b), in the 1880s, it was illusory to expect a population "naturally indolent and deprived of watercrafts capable of offshore voyaging" to travel every week to another island for prayer and religious education. The churches and the objects kept within them also constituted a form of substitute during the long and unavoidable absences of the priest, reminding the Catholics of the Church's force and bringing them back to their religious duties. Such a *modus operandi*, placing strong emphasis on "materialising" the mission, was by no means peculiar to the CSH or to Catholic missionaries in Oceania (on the Anglican missions in Papua New Guinea see Hermkens 2014: 418). However, it arguably took one of its most intense and desperate forms in the Tuamotus in the second half of the nineteenth century because of the specific environmental, geographic and socioreligious conditions. The need to build was particularly acute where the Mormons had already erected their temples (on Fakarava see Fouqué 1852a). In their letters, some Fathers contrasted the "vast empty rooms … bare of any religious symbolism" (Montiton 1856: 391) of the Mormon temples with the Catholic churches, and Mormon ceremonies using readily available local resources with Catholic rituals involving numerous foreign objects. Such differences were supposedly advantageous to the CSH. Yet one of the challenges they faced was maintaining the sacred character of their churches designed for celebrations, silence and prayer, as well as the "dignity" of the presbytery, which, for Verdier (1885c), was not supposed to be considered as a "common house where everyone can go sit and converse at will".

In addition to erecting churches, the Fathers engaged in building schools, wells and water tanks, all of which had a role to play in the grand missionary project. For these constructions as well, materials had to be imported (construction timber, paint, iron parts, etc.), in addition to the supplies necessary for running a school—the latter being considered as a tool of moral conquest. It was understood that these architectural performances inspired pride and gratitude, strengthening the hold of Catholicism. On the other hand, some priests also attempted to erase or desacralise material traces of non-Christian religion. In 1863, Bruno Schouten (1863) was leading the inhabitants of Fakahina "to some altars of their gods" and invited them to overthrow the "enormous stones", because the population seemed to "fear these divinities and respect these places". He also hoped to annihilate any impulse to go back to paganism. In other contexts, material symbols relating to the ancient and new religions were juxtaposed—so as to demonstrate the preeminence of Catholicism, and perhaps also to encourage a form of identification. In Napuka, Montiton (1869: 5) had a large wooden cross erected near a marae close to which a pile of turtle bones had been discovered, in order to "devote to the saviour … this part of the island desecrated for so long by the idolatrous cult of the Devil". In Raroia, the population continued going to traditional marae even after the Catholic church was completed in 1875. The priest then took the initiative of detaching the largest stone from the marae and using it as the stepping stone at the entrance of the church. After this operation, wrote Bengt Danielsson (1953: 130), "the church was always full".

GIVING AND EXCHANGING

While the Fathers believed they had encountered a certain taste for pomp and ceremony amongst the Pa'umotu people, they also quickly understood the importance of exchange and generosity in this Polynesian society, hence not hesitating to conclude Catholic celebrations with meals or gifts distributed to children and adults. Thus, firsthand accounts of the inauguration of a new church in Putuahara (Anaa) in February 1856 show that large quantities of western, Tahitian and local food products were gathered and ceremoniously displayed. The Catholic priests followed the local custom of formally accepting the food before giving it back to the chief for distribution (Loubat 1857). Their own contribution included 100 bottles of wine (Montiton 1856b: 4). For the blessing of another church in Tatakoto, Montiton (1873: 374) contributed "as much flour, rice and beans" as he could, and two pigs, while the population provided "seven huge turtles", tridacna clams and coconuts. A part of the items requested from the mission's authorities was thus intended for gifts or exchanges. These goods belonged to four categories: objects to cover and adorn the body; utilitarian objects (tools, fishing gear);

objects demonstrating religious obedience or intended to support devotion (scapular medals, rosaries); and food supplies and tobacco. They were selected by the Fathers based on previous experiences of exchange and the availability of goods and food supplies, and of course according to their own perception of the needs and tastes of the people. Some missionaries obviously tried to please the islanders, particularly to ease tensions due to the competition between religious groups. However, the Fathers pursued other clearly identified aims and expected tangible results from the transfer of objects, including to (i) arouse sympathy towards the mission and incite conversions, (ii) obtain the support of local dignitaries, (iii) improve the living conditions of a population seen as poor and backward, (iv) gain other goods and services in return and/or (v) implement a societal project. Some objects were intended to respond to basic physiological needs, others were supposed to create new habits—thus, pants or dresses were supposed to literally contribute to civilising their owners. Equally importantly, such items could become signs of identification for the new community of Catholic Christians, ones which symbolically placed them under the benevolent authority of the missionary Father or catechist and indicated they were not “pagans” or “heretics” (see Fig. 2).

Gifts were first a means of establishing contact with populations and their chiefs in the early days of evangelisation (on the use of gifts and exchanges by missionaries to establish relationships see also Bell 2013: 59; Hermkens 2014: 402). Schouten (1863) mentioned the “fabrics, ironware, wire” brought to Tatakoto and the population’s eagerness to acquire foreign objects, while Hippolyte Roussel (1865) offered one of his shirts to the “king” of Reao, and Montiton (1869) gifted a naval officer’s golden button to the chief of Napuka. While the presents were not reciprocated in the Tatakoto case, in Pukarua, where Roussel had himself introduced as a “priest of god” (*taura o te etua*) and offered fruits from Mangareva, the missionary was presented with several turtles—a most generous gift that may indicate that he was indeed perceived at that time as a high-ranking individual. In some atolls, it might be that the Fathers were invited or tolerated because they were seen as a potential source of access to foreign material goods. In 1849, the two main chiefs of Anaa asked the Catholic mission for two priests and requested at the same time clothes for their own usage (Jaussen 1849). In 1850, Faaite resident Fouqué (1850a) also considered that fabric was the most appropriate gift for the chief Teina, who was “expecting presents”. Exchange also soon became a means of obtaining fresh food supplies, with tobacco used to access chickens, coconuts and pigs (Fierens 1866b; Fouqué 1851a), or paper and quills to receive coconuts and fish (Fouqué 1855). Goods imported into the islands were also used to pay for services. In February 1857,

Fouqué (1857) explained he had given more than two “armfuls” (French *brasse*) of calico and more than one of *faraoti* ‘raw canvas’ to an Anaa islander that was employed as a cook and domestic worker, and who also requested a cardigan. Clothes were also counted as expenditures allocated to the construction of churches (Jaussen 1873).[10] There was a dual interest in giving clothes to the Pa‘umotu since it also allowed them to celebrate religious ceremonies “with dignity”. The construction of churches hence became a way for the communities to gain foreign objects and equipment, sailboats being the most prized items. In 1852, the population of Fakarava asked to build a stone church in exchange for a large cutter boat (Fouqué 1852b). Compensation was sometimes fiercely negotiated, and some Fathers understood that generosity in exchanges would become an important factor in their success: “[W]e could … gain support and arouse people’s interest, if we were a little less parsimonious with those who are giving us their services” (Fouqué 1851a). In Anaa in 1851, religious conversions themselves could generate expectations of compensation or be negotiated by the islanders against material or immaterial benefits (food offers, tobacco, healing; Laval 1851). In addition, gifts of food and artefacts were used as an “incentive to come and learn” or to reward those islanders who were the most dedicated at church, the most hardworking. For the blessing of the first stone of the church at Tatakoto, Montiton (1873: 289) handed out various objects to the inhabitants, such as harpoons and iron coconut scrapers, “as much to reward them for the work already done as to encourage them to participate in the remaining effort”. Christian rites of passage also came with gifts: for instance, Vincent de Paul Terlyn gave clothes, axes, fishhooks, fishing lines, etc. at the conclusion of baptisms and weddings celebrated in 1884 at Tematangi (*Les Missions Catholiques* 1890: 608).

According to the Picpus Fathers, the islanders were intrigued by their personal belongings (shoes, books, etc.) and received their presents with joy and gratitude (Fierens 1877a; *Les Missions Catholiques* 1890: 609), though also demonstrating preferences for certain categories of items, for example, biblical images, “especially where there is fire” (Fierens 1871); rosaries, worn as necklaces; red handkerchiefs; and metallic tools. A non-missionary source indicated that Tahitian newspapers, tobacco and imported foods (bacon, sardines) were also eagerly sought after in the 1880s (Ingouf 1883). The interest shown in items already worn out (“pieces of soutane, any kind of old thing”; Janeau 1890) was generally attributed to the poverty of the inhabitants. However, some Fathers did show how such objects were reappropriated by the islanders to gave them back life and meaning. In Tureia, islanders were “extremely skilful in using for fishing” barrel hoops already nearly entirely consumed by rust (Janeau 1890). The fact that a western fabric, blue calico, could be used to wrap precious relics within a

sacred wooden receptacle, or white cotton to lash the blade of a ceremonial adze (Emory 1975: 115; Kaeppler 2007: 112), is an indication of their value, but also of the natives' agency in linking their own cultural practices with imported goods.

The missionaries' writings hence suggest a strong appetite for foreign goods, of which the aesthetic qualities and functional properties were acknowledged and used in ways that were more or less predictable. But such goods may also have acted as "trophies of politically powerful allegiances, symbols of material wealth, and high-status adornment", as Jennifer Newell (2010: 41) phrased it, or even been seen as infused with the spiritual power of the newcomers and their god, at least in the first stages of conversion—a god whose efficiency was perhaps demonstrated by the fact that the missionaries did not die after desecrating marae (on marae power, see Grouard 1843–1846: 156). In any case, it is unlikely that the conversions were solely motivated by economic factors, even on these atolls (see Thomas 1992: 21–23). Historical accounts suggest that various factors could be at play in a person choosing to become or remain a Catholic, such as healings attributed to the priests or to the power of holy water (Laval 1849 and Fierens 1877a), or the hope of obtaining favours from the French administration. The charisma and efficiency of particular missionaries, or other abilities that could be understood as clear signs of *mana* 'power', also certainly played a role. While Grouard helped to expel *tūpāpaʻu* 'spirits' and was heralded by meteorological signs (Laval 1851), Fierens was credited with an authority "that no one ever … could … have" and which was not always "held within the bounds of sound reason": according to fellow priest Adrien Perray (1901), at least some of Fierens's followers believed he was clairvoyant. Terlyn (1883) also reported that a Mormon minister who had insulted Montiton and blasphemed became a catechist, presumably because he lost his eldest son and thought he had been cursed. On the other hand, if a desire for imported goods could encourage some to convert, it was clearly not enough to keep them in Catholicism since the Fathers had to deal with frequent apostasies, for example when a man hoped to be cured by a Mormon ritualistic healing, or when another fell in love with a Mormon woman and wanted to marry her (Verdier 1885c).

In the end, the objects and equipment brought by the Picpus Fathers appear to have responded to preexisting needs (marking distinction, controlling the local environment, etc.), but also to new tastes and necessities, born out of socioeconomic changes operating in French Polynesia (attraction for tobacco, changes to subsistence practices, etc.). The Fathers, while accusing the Paʻumotu of "excessive soliciting" (Fierens 1878; Laval 1851), learned to encourage and exploit the considerable attraction of foreign goods. As suggested by Danielsson (1956: 95), the objects imported by the missionaries

Figure 2. Catholics in Rangiroa (or Ragiroa) in western clothing, surrounding Father Germain (ca. 1874). Museum of Tahiti and the Islands (D2008 2-69).

certainly stirred up the desire to acquire always more and encouraged the islanders to become indebted towards the merchants and to enrol in paid activities, such as pearling and copra. They also favoured the abandonment or transformation of existing cultural practices by demonstrating the superiority of imported techniques and materials, such as metal.

BUILDING MODEL CHRISTENDOMS

Missionaries' actions were not limited to the conversion and religious edification of their followers. They also aimed to help the Pa'umotu build a more "civilised", fair and peaceful society that would offer an auspicious environment for the establishment of Catholicism. This transformation was to be realised through the existing material world: in addition to promoting the use of imported objects, the Fathers encouraged new economic practices and production modes, new ways of living and travelling in the islands. It was important to first provide the islanders with the means to "decently" and durably meet their most basic needs. In doing so, the Picpus Fathers compensated for the deficiencies of the French colonial administration, which they accused of neglecting the Tuamotu atolls (see Verdier 1885a). Despite some Fathers observing the "incredible dexterity" of the Pa'umotu fishermen (Fouqué 1850d), the dominant opinion remained that local resources (fish, aroid tubers from *maite* 'cultivation pits', tridacna clams, pandanus drupes, etc.) did not offer enough food security. The Fathers appear to have been

particularly uncomfortable with the unpredictability of fishing and with the alternating periods of food scarcity and abundance. Some were also shocked to realise that coconut trees, plants they considered by far as the most useful but that were rare on some atolls even in the late 1870s (Danielsson 1956: 64–65; Fierens 1878), could be intentionally chopped down and destroyed during conflicts (Roussel 1874) or after a death—see Fierens (1871): "[H]is plantation was destroyed, everything was offered to the deceased person's gods". As early as 1856, Montiton (1856a) observed enthusiastically that this "unique" tree was "obviously destined to become the second Providence of the Paumotous, so poor, so destitute". For him, Anaa's coconut groves represented a source of wealth "more secure, profitable and far easier to exploit" than pearl-shell, which was already considered as exhausted in this atoll in the mid-1850s. In addition to such risk of depletion, pearling had other disadvantages: as the diving spots were unevenly spread, the start of a new diving season prompted population movements that disrupted parish life and the work of evangelisation. Moreover, the seasonal profits led to outbreaks of parties. There was also high physical risk associated with the gruelling work of pearling. In this context, the Fathers began to encourage coconut cultivation, even transporting on their boat, *Vatikana*, in the 1870s, gardening soil and nuts for planting.[11] Transforming the atolls via coconut plantations was expected to trigger a series of positive changes. The people would be better nourished all year long, could access imported and "civilising" items thanks to the trading of coconut products, would secure their economic independence and would be freed of their isolation due to an increase in merchant ships' visits. In the 1880s, Verdier (1885b) considered that plantation work had helped to end the "distant wanderings" in which the islanders "died in bloody battles, or in terrible storms". The Pa'umotu, when better nourished, were also supposed to become more open to the missionaries' teachings and to help more readily in construction work. Thus, the Fathers gambled on using an existing but unequally distributed resource and on helping the Pa'umotu to make the most of it.

In the meantime, they attempted to gather the islanders in permanent villages around the church and church activities and to limit or control their movements. Their writings speak of the high mobility of the Pa'umotu within each atoll and also to islands further away. This mobility was sometimes attributed to the necessity of looking for food and other times to "adventurous tastes" (Fouqué 1850d), the desire to visit diving spots or the social organisation itself: adoption, for instance, would push a child to "run between one home and the other, just as a butterfly" (Montiton 1856a). The inhabitants' voyages, sometimes leaving an island deserted from one day to the other (Fouqué 1861), were considered as an additional obstacle by the Fathers. However, the construction of churches and schools did not

succeed in halting these movements. Indeed, Fouqué (1856) deplored that the schoolchildren, accompanying the adults in their wanderings, had soon forgotten what they had learned. In 1890, Vincent-Ferrier Janeau estimated as well that the poor results achieved on Hao were due to the inhabitants "continually voyaging, and spending entire seasons scattered in various places, far from their village". Furthermore, travel exposed converts to dreaded foreign influences: merchants who could push them to become indebted and to purchase alcohol, Polynesians from other religious groups who might "corrupt" the neophytes, etc. The Catholic missionaries tried to draw the islanders in by making their religious celebrations as attractive as possible, but also followed them in their circulation, constructing churches wherever diving and copra work occurred, even if remote.

Meanwhile, the missionaries also contributed to the transformation of modes of habitation. In Faaite the population was reduced to "huts, scattered here and there … very miserable" (Fouqué 1850d), while "most" of Napuka's inhabitants had not even "the smallest hut to be protected from the rain", according to Fierens (1878). Montiton (1873: 281), visiting Fangatau (or Fagatau) in 1870, initiated displacement of the principal settlement and endeavoured to provide the islanders with "habitations more adequate for good hygiene and morale", that is to say, "closed bungalows, separated and properly set apart from one another". Not only were such models of habitation expected to be more secure and durable, they also represented the social project of the Fathers and were to help reform traditions, for instance, by fighting against promiscuity between sexes and generations. In addition, the missionaries set upon creating paths and roads permitting the organisation of processions, events that Montiton acknowledged as having "always enjoyed" (1873: 291; see Fierens 1878 on Napuka). Water tanks constructed out of lime and coral stone, masonry-made wells and Catholic cemeteries to properly "house the dead" were attached to the villages. These had to be constructed but also maintained, under the direction of the Fathers and Polynesian catechists. Indeed, not only did the villages have to be equipped with everything indispensable for an honest Christian life, they also, ideally, were expected to be clean and beautiful. Aspects of this missionary aesthetic appeared in a 1909 letter by Hervé Audran, where he deplored the damage inflicted by two cyclones upon the "pretty villages, formerly so charming to see with their long sandy streets fringed with gigantic coconut trees offering their auspicious shade and beautiful houses in perfect lines with their lovely verandas". The Fathers themselves made every effort to build, rebuild, decorate or lime-bleach constructions, whose quality and durability were also, without doubt, a measure of their personal success in the Tuamotu mission. In addition to participating in the transformation of the natural environment, the missionaries and catechists hence contributed

Figure 3. Early historic house and well, both made of coral blocks, in Hōkikakika. Author's photo, 2019.

to the dissemination of new types of housing and building techniques (see Fierens 1871) and implemented new forms of spatial organisation. In many atolls, monumental crosses, calvaries, religious buildings and wells became new spatial references and memorial landmarks. The early historic village of Hōkikakika in Fakahina (Fig. 3) is a perfect illustration of the new usages and architectural concepts emerging during the second half of the nineteenth century, partly (but not only) under the influence of the CSH.[12]

Furthermore, the Fathers encouraged the adoption of new types of objects and food products, which slowly found their place in the local ways of life. For instance, the Fathers contributed to the promotion of imported flour, as it was given out together with other foreign goods to the newly converted Christians—who progressively started to exchange it with merchants for mats, coconut-fibre cord (*nape*), turtle shell and copra (Ingouf 1883). The Fathers also rejoiced in seeing western garments being worn more regularly during the second half of the nineteenth century, even when their uses were judged inappropriate or were ridiculed (Fierens 1884: 386); they even tried to import weaving techniques on some atolls (Laval 1849). Photographs taken in the early 1870s (see Figs 1 and 2) and in 1884 by members of the

Vanadis expedition[13] show that western clothing was by then well diffused in the western atolls. In 1883, inhabitants of the remote eastern atoll of Tatakoto were also all "more or less" dressed in western clothes (Ingouf 1883) and obtained fabric and sewing machines in exchange for copra, turtle shell and handicrafts. Additionally, a process of hybridisation in material culture gradually took place with, for example, the manufacture of adzes from iron blades and of hooks from old bolts and nails (Alexander 1902: 749). The Fathers themselves built chapels out of perishable materials and stone churches with thatched roofs (see Fig. 1), but their letters suggest that such hybridity was more the result of resource constraints than the effect of a well-considered strategy of inculturation. Texts from the 1850s relating to the decoration of churches show the incorporation of local elements (such as plants, or coconut oil to produce light), but above all the desire was to obtain foreign items, which could be imported from Europe or from Chile, where the CSH had been present since the 1830s: "Send us everything you will be able to find, fake flowers, a holy ciborium, thuribles, curtains for the windows …" (Montiton 1856b).

It would be wrong to think that the Catholics rejected the existing society and culture wholesale. As noted above, they understood and adapted to aspects of local etiquette, such as the importance of feasts and donations. Additionally, we know that a priest who tried to restrict adoption, by preventing Catholic children from being given to "unworthy" families, was punished by his superiors (Butaye 1898).[14] On the other hand, nineteenth-century missionaries seem to have shown little interest in Pa'umotu material production, which is most often mentioned in very vague and general terms, including in the writings of some priests, like Montiton, whose stays were extended and who described some local customs. For instance, barely a mention is made regarding the ability of women and girls in weaving mats and baskets, including in the western part of the group where, according to William Ellis (1831, I: 187), inhabitants "exceed[ed] the Society islanders in the quality of their mats". Disparaging comments can also be found about the tiny dwellings where one had "to enter on all fours" (Fierens 1871), local weapons which were compared to "sticks", or even the marae, which for Fierens (1871, n.d.) were merely "heaps of stones" and did not offer "these imposing and majestic masses of stone-made constructions one can still see in Tahiti". According to Kenneth P. Emory (1975: 5), the Pa'umotu were "poor in material possessions" as compared to Tahitians, who had access to a wider range of raw materials. Even if they showed great ingenuity in replacing basalt with marine shells, manufacturing canoes using stitched planks and making small and easily rebuilt dwellings to fit their seminomadic lifestyle, such cultural features were mostly interpreted by early missionaries as signs of structural poverty and backwardness. We know that some of the

missionaries did acquire items which could have been “found” and “kept” as “objects of curiosity”, as Schouten (1863) noted for sacred reliquaries from Fakahina, or received as gifts.[15] However, no information was found to indicate that they actually *exchanged* their own European goods for Pa‘umotu artefacts, such as the necklace of five pearl-shells or the shark-tooth knife that are now preserved in the museum of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts in Rome (see Bell 2013 and Gardner 2000 about missionary collecting and trading in other regions of Oceania). This again might reflect a certain lack of interest in or esteem for Pa‘umotu objects, but also that various items were considered too rare, too sacred or too precious to part with, at least on a regular basis—refusals to exchange precious objects such as paddles, clubs and spears are indeed mentioned in Wilkes (1845, I: 331–32).

* * *

There is no doubt that the Picpus Fathers contributed to the constitution of new material traditions and economic forms, yet it appears that the strategies implemented did not always produce the expected results. It needs to be remembered first that the Fathers’ presence could provoke opposition, especially where it was considered as emanating from and supporting French colonisation, and that conflicts did arise. Autochthonous resistance could be expressed by behaviours of avoidance, apathy, or the theft or destruction of material goods owned by the Fathers or that symbolised their actions. In Anaa, where “the Protectorate was hated” in the early 1850s, the Fathers only managed with great difficulty to obtain precious presbyteries and chapels, as their construction was being “slackened by laziness, cupidity, unwillingness” (Jaussen n.d.). In November 1852, the anti-French rebellion that brought about the assassination of Charles Viry also saw the devastation of the presbytery and of a chapel in Tekotika on Anaa (see Loubat 1852). Similarly, coconut plantations were established with varying success and rapidity depending on the islands. In Tureia and Tematangi, the inhabitants at first ate the coconuts that had been brought to help them develop plantations (Mazé 1930). Likewise, while some atolls, like Fakahina, gained profitable coconut plantations relatively quickly, that of Napuka, for example, did not export copra until the 1920s. In fact, it may be assumed that the infrequency of merchant ship visits in the most remote islands was a real hindrance and discouraged the inhabitants from actively initiating coconut plantations, among other reasons. Furthermore, the high mobility of the islanders continued, despite changes in residence patterns—this mobility even being, paradoxically, further stimulated by the coconut economy, since the atolls were divided into sectors from which copra was harvested in succession and not all at once (Barrau 1961: 12). The Pa‘umotu

also continued to travel to distant atolls where they had family connections and land rights in order to collect copra.

While the Fathers were willing to see commercial activities developed and to promote the use of some imported goods, they were not always able to arouse desire for profit maximisation, control the emergence of "inappropriate" consumption practices or prevent the flow of undesirable items. Islanders were considered to be frivolous and naive by nature, incapable of saving their hard-won gains and of avoiding the traps and tricks of interisland business. In 1851, Honoré Laval (1851) deplored the fact that Anaa islanders "consume … most of their coconuts at pagan dance feasts … and as gifts" rather than produce coconut oil and pay off their debts (see also Pépin 1851). At the turn of the century, Janeau (1900) still pointed to the "futility" of islanders who sought to acquire "fragrances" first, and not clothing to cover their bodies. Moreover, attempts to introduce objects or transmit new tastes and skills did not always produce the intended results. Some products or items did not find their place in the Pa'umotu material world; others were diverted from their original purpose. Thus, the consumption of flour as a ball of unleavened dough (*ipo*) instead of as baked bread was mocked by Janeau, who also lamented that soap was used to seal letters. According to Paul Mazé (n.d.), in 1919 one still "only slightly" felt the need to wear clothes in Napuka, and inhabitants then wore "just the minimum necessary". The Fathers furthermore noted with bitterness that their enthusiasm to build and preserve architectural monuments was not always shared by the Pa'umotu, even among those who had been converted for some time. Some of them noted how slow the workers were on church construction sites (Fierens 1877a), their fierce negotiation of payment terms and the difficulty in mobilising their energies. Even though the Fathers often overcame resistance through persuasion and rewards, many complained that the churches, and their liturgical furniture and ornaments, were not properly treated and maintained during their absences. Nature itself sometimes seemed intent on destroying their work. The Fathers might have rejoiced at seeing the pagan temples damaged or obliterated by cyclones and storms, yet their churches, presbyteries and schools also suffered. The cyclone of 6 February 1878 had appalling consequences in the western part of the archipelago, in particular devastating Anaa and Kaukura, where 117 people perished, as well as Rangiroa (Teissier [1969] 1977). Tuuhora, the main village in Anaa, was devastated, houses and water tanks were destroyed, the dead unearthed by storm surges and thousands of coconut trees uprooted or damaged. Reconstructing destroyed buildings and restoring their former splendour posed considerable difficulty due to distance and cost. Cyclones also profoundly disorganised village life and tended to reactivate the islanders' nomadic habits, while the Fathers aspired to the stability of the European parish structure. The ruin of the material world that had been

so patiently erected, whether seen as a test from God or an obstacle raised by the Devil, came as an additional difficulty to the Fathers in maintaining their progress. More generally, the low frequency of the missionaries' visits, due to the distance between the atolls and to the lack of personnel, seemed to render their victories eternally precarious and work to the benefit of their LDS and RLDS rivals (see Janeau 1890 about the Sanitos in Hao; Saura 1997). Such a feeling constituted a potion more bitter than the material privations, and the missionaries lamented, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the lack of fervour and faith among the Pa'umotu. The islanders were inclined to believe "much more … in ghost stories than in the mysteries of our holy religion" (Montiton 1856a: 9) and were accused of being inconsistent (Fierens 1866c). Ultimately, the Fathers could only hope to achieve substantial progress by being more present on the ground. Even though objects and edifices were important to the work of evangelisation, the mission above all needed people: missionaries to open the way, catechists to maintain the faith. Fierens (1877b) became convinced that opening a school for catechists was worth "ten times more than 4 or 5 large stone churches" and regretted not being able to be everywhere at once: indeed, the people of Napuka had told him that they would abandon polygamy if he agreed to stay by their side—which the missionary was unable to do.

As a final word, one may say that the Picpus Fathers' material practices were both part of an existing missionary tradition and influenced by the local context. Among the important factors was the intense rivalry with other religious groups—this increased the need to provide proof of the presence of Catholicism and organise dramatic ceremonies. The great distances between the islands were also a factor, along with the view that the Pa'umotu were more wretched than any other people in French Polynesia and greatly needed improvement in their material conditions. Even if the Fathers did not express a strong interest in or appetite for Pa'umotu material culture, they nevertheless occasionally collected artefacts: these were sent or brought to Tahiti or Europe as reciprocal gifts to the Church's benefactors, to satisfy the curiosity of colleagues or to be displayed as trophies and pedagogical tools. Some, such as a "superstitious box" from Tematangi, collected in 1884 by Terlyn and offered to the Vicar Apostolic of Tahiti (*Les Missions Catholiques* 1890: 609), or idols collected by Montiton and offered to the Pope Pius IX (1874: 499, 504), represented the ancient Polynesian world with, in the eyes of the Fathers, all its delusions and excesses. Others were examples of local crafts and were expected both to raise support for the Tuamotu mission and to produce records of cultural worlds that were considered nearly lost. While contributing to the ongoing mediation of relationships between various actors in the European missionary movement, such objects helped to preserve fragments of the materiality and memories of the Tuamotuan past.

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NOTES

1. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, ships sailed through the Tuamotus looking for *Pinctada margaritifera* (pearl-shell) oysters, from which the natural pearls and nacreous shell were eagerly sought (see Moerenhout 1837; Newbury 1980). Numerous atolls did not possess large natural populations or were located in remote and reputedly dangerous zones, hence remaining outside of the commercial networks. The business of coconut oil first, and then copra (from the 1870s), similarly developed during the nineteenth century, with some islands, planted at a later stage, remaining very isolated until the 1920s–1930s (see Danielsson 1956: 96–97).
2. This congregation was founded in 1800 by Pierre-Marie-Joseph Coudrin and approved by the Pope in 1817. In 1825, Pope Leo XII charged the Picpus Fathers with the evangelisation of the Sandwich Islands, and, in 1833, Pope Gregory XVI gave them responsibility for the Vicariate of Eastern Oceania (Wiltgen 1979: 10, 83–85). A detailed analysis of the missionaries' background has been provided by Pierre-Yves Toullelan (1995). Many of those who served in the Tuamotus during the nineteenth century were of humble origin and came from pious, rural settings, especially in Brittany and Normandy. Very long careers were not uncommon: for instance, Vincent de Paul Terlyn (from Belgium) died in Faaite during the 1906 cyclone after serving for 35 years.
3. Regarding the Catholic mission in the Tuamotus, there are a few historical syntheses, produced by members of the Congregation and which are often difficult to access (e.g., Desmedt 1932; Mérian 1928–1933). Data was also integrated from more general studies on the history of Catholicism in Oceania and the works of the Picpus Fathers (Hodée 1983; Toullelan 1995; Wiltgen 1979), from volumes examining important figures in the Catholic Church (Prat and Hermel 2015–2016) and from anthropological studies (Danielsson 1956).
4. Benjamin Franklin Grouard, a member of a group of missionaries in charge of carrying out the teachings of Joseph Smith in the South Seas, arrived in Anaa in 1845 and found rapid success. However, the LDS missionaries encountered a series of severe difficulties—especially conflicts with the Catholic Church and the French colonial government, which arrested and deported one of them, James Brown—and all had left Tahiti by the end of 1852. Converts carried on the work of evangelisation for a considerable time. When LDS missionaries

returned to Tahiti in 1892, they discovered that many converts had become members of the Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (known as Sanito or Kanito Church in French Polynesia), which arose in 1860 from a scission within the Mormon Church. See Douglas (2005: 247–49, 260); Ellsworth (1959); Saura (1997).

5. There is considerable academic literature on these issues (see Essertel 2011; Gardner 2000; Hooper 2006; King 2011; Newell 2010; Thomas 1992; Wingfield 2017, among others).
6. This article is based on manuscript sources that are kept in the CSH's archives in Rome. All quotations were translated from French. The missionaries' first names mentioned here are not their real birth names but the names they took within the CSH.
7. In April 1846, Addison Pratt (1843–1852) observed in his journal that he and Grouard had no "society at home to provide for [their] necessities" and contrasted their situation to that of the "English missionaries" who had "a salary that supports them and their families like gentlemen". Although they may have lived "on cocoanuts and raw fish … most of the time", Pratt and Grouard were also treated with feasts and valuable gifts (which could include fine pandanus mats, pearls, live pigs and hens; see Pratt 1843–1852, 25 September 1846) by members of their church. On 1 July 1846, Pratt wrote that he "gave them a bit of stirring up for being slack in feeding their orometuas [ministers]" and received sixteen baskets of coconuts the next day. See also Brown (1900: 208, 212).
8. Regarding the architectural achievements of the Picpus Fathers in Polynesia, see in particular Hodée (1983); Laval (1968); Toullelan (1995); Delbos (2011).
9. The reference to the "materiality in which it is somehow buried" refers to the supposed down-to-earth concerns of a population described as "sensual" (Mérian 1928–1933: 91) and primarily driven by material profit and immediate pleasure. This is a frequent accusation in the nineteenth-century Catholic literature.
10. On the interest in western clothing and other western goods see Hooper (2006) and Jolly (2014).
11. The French government supported the planting of coconut trees (*Messager de Tahiti* 1854) but also became aware of the danger of relying on the monoculture of coconut because of cyclones and pests (Violle 1905). Regarding the plantation activities of the Picpus Fathers, see Fierens (1873) and Toullelan (1995: 205–11). For comparative data on the planting of coconuts by Catholic (Marist) missionaries in Wallis and Futuna and how it could serve the mission's interests, see Stevens (2018).
12. In April 2019, this village in ruins, initially designed by Montiton, was the subject of an interdisciplinary research project by CIRAP (Tahiti), undertaken by Louis Lagarde (UNC), Guillaume Molle (ANU) and the author (Lagarde *et al.*, forthcoming). For comparative data on the emergence of new architectural traditions in nineteenth-century Hawai'i, see Spencer Forsythe (1997).
13. The photographs in Figures 1 and 2 are attributed to Charles Burton Hoare (Museum of Tahiti and the Islands). For details on the Vanadis expedition (1883–1885) photographs see the Ethnographic Museum of Stockholm database: http://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web (accessed 16 June 2020)

14. On the attitude of Catholic missionaries towards tradition, see Hamilton (1998), Lātūkefu (1974) and Wiltgen (1979), among others.
15. In Anaa, Addison Pratt (1843–1852) received “very smooth and cool” mats, a “wooden shark hook”, pearls and nape as presents. Others reported having received artefacts in various circumstances. For instance, during Captain Ingouf’s governmental visit (1883), Reao’s inhabitants received various gifts and later offered coconuts, mats, nape and chicken. Similar gifts of artefacts were probably made to the Catholic missionaries, although very little is known on this subject.

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