

Things in Motion

Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice

Edited by Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie



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Things in Motion

Itineraries of Ulua Marble Vases

Rosemary A. Joyce

Histories of objects have been usefully explored as “biographies,” helping us understand the accretion of connections, sentiments, value, and significance that even humble objects can experience over time (Appadurai 1986a; Hoskins 1998; Kopytoff 1986). The concept of the object biography, with its animation of things, helps us see that objects have what Barad (1999, 2003, 2007) called “agential possibility.” Yet, by viewing things through an explicitly anthropomorphic construct, object biographies can impede our understanding of how objects work in the manner of things, instead personifying them in the manner of humans. Diana Coole (2013:453, 460–461) strongly questioned the equation of human and nonhuman agential possibility, arguing that ignoring differences between the agential potential of nonhuman things and humans, who have “(self-)consciousness, cognition, or rationality,” risks losing the sense of the “responsibility” of humans for the damage knowingly accomplished in the world we share with others. An object with a biography cannot refuse its own use in destructive action; if anthropomorphized, it can, however, take the blame in the end, particularly when its effects outlast and go beyond the intentions of the humans who made and used it.

One solution to this problem has been the designation of the agency allowed to objects as secondary, delegated to things by humans (Gell

things, however active, to extensions of a human presence. In contrast, actor-network-theory has been described as attempting to discern how "material agency" works, acknowledging the "constant processes of folding together people and things in networks of activity" in which "action is distributed between people and things" (Jones and Boivin 2010:346). Such entanglement of things and people in action should make us pause to ask why we might want to narrow our focus to any one part of what Latour (2005) called the "network" (perhaps better captured by Tim Ingold's concept of meshwork; see Ingold 2011:89–94; Harris 2013:176–177). We should be concerned about this artificial isolation when the biographical subject is a thing just as much as when the featured subject is a human person.

Object biographies, for all the inspiration they have provided and the insight that has developed by our thinking about things this way, carry forward some problematic aspects of the initial subject-object dualism that contemporary theory is contesting. As Thrift (2010:640) argued, things "may have biographies but this itself is too human-centred a description of their existence." Yet, we lose something methodologically if we cannot, as Latour (2005) urged, follow things in the network or trace what Ingold (2011:91) described as "the lines *along* which" we live, which he argued are extensions of the beings in the meshwork. We also give up something representationally if we cannot use the evocative metaphor of biography quite as easily as we might once have thought.

This chapter outlines an alternative approach to following things or tracing the lines along which things live: treating these as itineraries rather than as biographies (see also Gibson 1979:195–197). My concept of itinerary builds on the work of Michel de Certeau (1984:115–130).¹ Tim Dant (2004:77) defined de Certeau's itinerary as "a series of relations between places." De Certeau (1984:116) introduced itinerary in the context of a general consideration of "sayings and stories that organize places through the displacements they 'describe,'" "narrative actions," and "practices organizing space," that is, as representations. He discussed the itinerary (or "tour") in contrast to the map (de Certeau 1984:118–122). He argued that itineraries (or tours) are about "spatializing actions" (de Certeau 1984:120). Ingold (2007b:15–16), engaging with de Certeau, argued that a distinction between "trail-following or wayfaring" and concepts of preplanned spatialized movement is critical: "The navigator has before him a complete representation of the territory, in the form of a cartographic map, upon which he can plot a course even before setting out.... In wayfaring, by

contrast, one follows a path that one has previously travelled in the company of others, or in their footsteps, reconstructing the itinerary as one goes along." He went on to cite de Certeau as demonstrating how, in European history, maps came to be presented without "traces of the practices that produced" them, losing their character as "illustrated stories of journeys made" (Ingold 2007b:24, 85).

De Certeau's itinerary is thus a form of "spatial story" (see Wallis 2008:245). As I argue below, spatialized narratives of things avoid some of the awkward anthropomorphisms that object biographies have produced. On a theoretical level, scholars engaged with contemporary theories of materiality and new materialism should be concerned about the slippage from anthropomorphizing to anthropocentrism that has been demonstrated in "it-narratives," a popular predecessor in the nineteenth century of object biographies (Bernaerts et al. 2014:75).

One way that a focus on itinerary shifts our narration of things is by promoting seeing them as "nodes in a matrix of movement" (Ingold 2000:219). Yet, at the same time, spatial stories are also temporal: what Wallis (2008:245) called "the tour form of spatial knowledge" is "inherently diachronic, and subject to change." In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), de Certeau was concerned with differentiating between a map and an itinerary, emphasizing the spatial, but later he turned to the temporality of itineraries. This occurred precisely in a discussion of the narrativization of things using the example of Hieronymus Bosch's early sixteenth century painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (de Certeau 1992:49–72). De Certeau (1992:51) emphasized that a number of potential narratives can be provided for the things in this one painting, concluding that it "offers a multiplicity of possible itineraries, the traces of which... would constitute so many stories." These "narrative wanderings" (de Certeau 1992:67) are journeys suggested by things, acknowledging the interdependence of the representation and the things whose movements it traces.

Both biographies and itineraries are narrative devices to present temporalized stories. Like the biography, the itinerary offers a methodological approach and a representational trope. While not enjoining anyone from recourse to the notion of an object biography, my argument is that the lives of things can be distorted when forced into the mold of a human life course. The same aspects of the existence of things that strain biography, however, can be described without loss of their unique character by thinking of things as moving from site to site, assembling in sites along with other things, humans, nonhuman animals, and forces, in the kind of "doing" that Barad (1999, 2003, 2007) described as "intra-action."

In archaeology, object biographies have been critical to imagining how things are active (Gosden 2005; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Joy 2009). In an influential formulation, Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall characterized object biography as a metaphor and described its "central idea": "As people and objects gather time, movement and change, they are constantly transformed, and these transformations of person and object are tied up with each other" (Gosden and Marshall 1999:169). Untangling objects from people, this implies that what was critical in object biography, in these scholars' view, was the degree to which it emphasized the continual transformation of things over time. They made a distinction between object biography and an earlier concept of use life that did not attribute activity to things. At the same time, their discussion of object biography continued to emphasize a human perspective, describing the goal of object biography as "to understand the way objects become invested with meaning through the social interactions they are caught up in" (Gosden and Marshall 1999:170).

Gosden and Marshall (1999) illustrated their concept of object biography with a narrative about a whale tooth neck ornament in the Pitt Rivers Museum. The narrative imagined a Fijian visitor to the museum and the way he might react to seeing the object there. It presented categorical descriptions of the histories of related objects, single whale teeth and whale tooth necklaces, which were presented as an innovative multipart object type. The authors added specific details of the transmission of this particular piece from a named Fijian person to named Europeans. Rather than as a biography of the object, however, their example served more as a way to organize a story about relations among people, both individuals and groups, engaged in particular transformative historical moments. These moments are analogous to the turning points that Dant (2001) described as an aspect of writing human lives.

With the emphasis on relations, the object biography presented by Gosden and Marshall anticipated Joy's (2009:544) later argument that the kind of biography that can be created for an object is not a narrative biography, but a relational one, "the sum of the social relationships that constitute the object." Yet, even contemporary works explicitly using the concept of relational biography have continued to employ the language of birth, life, and death that is proper to what is called narrative biography. Although largely avoiding the narrative framework, Joy (2009:543) nonetheless said that archaeological objects are found "most often...at the moment they [end] their social lives," which is another way to say "death."

Like the humans whose remains are found in archaeological burials, things recovered in archaeological sites are considered dead. Joy (2009) also cited, apparently as reasonable characterizations, previous proposals that things taken up again and circulated are "reincarnations." Because things do not have continuous and closed lives in the way the birth-to-death trajectory suggests, scholars have been forced to propose that things have afterlives, are reincarnated, or otherwise experience cycles of death and life. Some objects simply are not very much like human persons; they may well be active, but their experiences are fundamentally different (not lesser) and the biography concept is strained to capture those differences.

This tension was inherent in the object biography concept in archaeology from the beginning. Gosden and Marshall (1999:176) proposed a critical distinction "between objects which can accumulate biographies to themselves, and objects which contribute to the biography of a ceremony or body of knowledge, rather than accumulating their own inherent meanings." The implication was that some objects actually had singular stories, narrative biographies, making them very much like human persons, whereas others were parts of stories but not subjects in the same way.

Metaphors used for both relational and narrative object biographies can be problematic. An object is not reincarnated each time it enters social relations anew. Rather, an object "becomes alive within certain clusters of social relationships and is inactive at other points in time and space" (Joy 2009:544). Despite arriving at an understanding of the trajectory of things as punctuated by moments of movement and stillness over time and space, similar to what I advocate here as object itineraries, Joy (2009:544) was forced by the biography metaphor to characterize these trajectories as "a series of different lives and deaths."

Joy (2009) exemplified the relational biographical approach with a study of a single bronze mirror from England, likely made in the first century AD. Elaborate production details and evidence of careful preservation show that the mirror in question was a socially significant thing. Other things that have been understood to have the potential for biographical analysis are often similar: things that analysts see as potentially important in the lives of humans in the past, like the Fijian whale tooth necklace in the Pitt Rivers Museum (see also Dant 2001). The piece of obsidian, wrapped in a cloth bundle, that was the body of a Tarascan deity would seem like a prime example. Yet, as Haskell (chapter 4, this volume) shows, this central object was used as a core to strike blades that then moved out into the polity, extending the scope of action of the deity/bundle/obsidian core. An object biography could describe the striking of the blades a

to describe the journeys of the blades removed as part of a single life story, even a relational one.

Objects that were conserved, curated in museums, or used as heirlooms are ripe for being treated as having the kind of animacy, once reserved to humans, that object biography can recognize in things (see Cooper 2011). Thus, the stone figurines gathered in a single deposit at La Venta (Gillespie, chapter 3, this volume) might individually be thought of as having lives of their own. Nipmuc baskets that today are part of museum collections in New England (Law Pezzarossi, chapter 10, this volume) were the subjects of biography creation that included affixing labels carrying the life stories that donors wanted to perpetuate. In each of these cases, however, object biography fails to capture critical aspects of the experiences and active engagements of the things in question.

The assemblage that Gillespie (chapter 3, this volume) considers has its own history of circulation, but the multiplicity of the objects involved and the modern museum contexts in which much of this played out would not be easily accommodated even in a relational object biography. Even less evident is how an object-biography approach would capture the kinds of connections Law Pezzarossi (chapter 10, this volume) explores. The lining of baskets with newspapers connects the baskets to other sites, but these acts of lining with paper, even if described in individual basket biographies, did not take place at these other sites, nor do they reflect back to them. The biographies recorded on the affixed labels project human lives onto the baskets, making them into "biographical objects" as discussed by Janet Hoskins (1998), with significance that comes not primarily from their own origin and development, but from their relation to the memory and life of a human person. At the same time, these baskets have undergone a string of experiences that began with the gathering of plants and the adaptation of tools and continue with their display and publication. They have both relational and narrative biographies, in Joy's (2009) terms.

Although object biography most immediately brings to mind discussions of mobile things like these, which are crafted, used, recycled, and discarded during a finite life span, biographical approaches have also been applied to archaeological monuments like Avebury (Gillings and Pollard 1999) and to the archaeology and ethnography of houses (Gerritsen 1999; Tringham 2000; Waterson 2000). Discussions of houses have emphasized the ability of the sets of fixed features that are traces of dwellings to shape human action, ascribing agential possibility to these things (Gieryn 2002; Hinchings 2004; Pauketat and Alt 2005). Such agential potential of houses persists even

when they are in ruins or buried. Tringham (2000:123) described an instance in which a well from an earlier building, filled and covered over, continued to affect later buildings in the same site. Should we consider this an afterlife, a "haunting" of the later buildings by the earlier? Or can we accept that the buried well never died? It is still there, still doing things.

As assemblages, buildings raise particular challenges for biography. When a building is entirely rebuilt in the same place, with the same layout and features, is that an episode in the life of the preceding building, or has a new building been "born"? Māori construction of named, personified houses suggests that the house remains the same even as all of its parts are replaced, with successive episodes of building described as "a series of incarnations rather than one building" (McKay and Walmsley 2003:95). What biographical process describes an identity that continues through several similarly located and named but physically distinct things?

The personification of objects that is inherent in the use of biography as an organizing framework has a number of drawbacks. It can result in a narrow focus on one segment of an ongoing history of the object's experiences, particularly when taken literally as the biography of a *specific* object. A limitation to the discernible facts of life of one thing can lead to episodic accounts. These, of necessity, stop and start abruptly, tracing only the segment of the life of an object that can be established through archaeological or archival research. Although reframing as relational biography helps, it does not capture the very real potential often present to understand the spatial and temporal trajectories of singular things, even with gaps in their unique histories.

In practice, object biography has been used to discuss whole classes of things as often as it has been used to trace the lives of specific things. There are examples in which a categorical approach, especially when combined with the redefinition of biography as relational, has yielded interesting narratives of the potential ways things circulated and acted in different settings (Cooper 2011). In other cases, the creation of categorical biographies can imply that different things gained some of their identity, perhaps most of it, from their membership in a category. When such composite object biographies are constructed, the effect of showing things as active, intended by the metaphor of biography, can be undercut, and we risk a return to an older typological universe in which things were primarily signs of something else.

The concept of object biography requires us to start the story when the thing first exists, usually as a worked artifact or an artifact in the making. Yet, many of the most interesting narratives allowed by the long temporal

view of archaeology deal with conversion over time periods that are more extensive. In the geologies in motion that Roddick (chapter 7, this volume) explores, things remain intimately, materially connected to the places where their components originated, and they may demonstrate those connections on multiple levels. We can push back the origins of pottery vessels to the geological provenance of their constituents and call that the moment of birth in the object biography (cf. Cooper 2011:256–259). Yet, this is an odd kind of birth since it occurs across space and in many distinct places.

The life course of things is, as all of those who have seriously engaged with the biography concept have noted, not directional in the way that the metaphor based on human birth-life-death demands. Objects do not just change from commodities to gifts, or vice versa (Kopytoff 1986), or from useful thing to rubbish and back (Thompson 1979). Archaeologists trace conversions from source (or raw) material to worked object to reworked object to repurposed object, in what in theory is an infinite chain, limited only by the time elapsed since the geologic material became a focus of human activity. Thus, as Díaz-Guardamino (chapter 6, this volume) demonstrates for a series of standing stone monuments in the Iberian Peninsula, things that appear to be motionless now actually should be understood to be in motion and simply seen as temporarily at a point when their rate of movement has slowed to a pause.

In most situations, the entanglement of things and people exceeds anything resembling biographical stages. We can stretch the metaphor by pushing the birth of an object back to the episode of mining geologic materials. We can keep the object alive forever as an immortal museum piece or grant it an afterlife as a modern cultural property (Meskell 2004:57). Yet, treating such stages in the movement of some thing as the resuscitation of a properly “dead” object implicitly rests on the idea that the real life of the object should be linked forever to the intentions of the human actors who originally made it. As Bauer (chapter 8, this volume) shows, the status of objects of cultural property or cultural heritage is no afterlife. Indeed, we might say that the continued circulation of things in cosmopolitan museums today reaches back to their origins and transforms places in the pasts of objects into sites of historical and nationalist significance.

Objects in long-term historical networks are not actually much like people. As Dant (2001) said, objects do not have much of a life. The duration of objects in time has made the biography metaphor compelling, but there are too many ways in which it does not fit. As objects accrue histories, they can do so while changing state radically or while staying fundamentally the same in material properties. These characteristics of object lives

are not easily encompassed by the concept of biography, yet they are central to things as things.

PUTTING THINGS IN MOTION

Things are mobile. They are detachable from any one context. They can and do move from place to place and from person to person. As they go along, like humans, they form parts of multiple networks that assemble and reassemble over time, as Latour (2005) suggested, or they become parts of the meshworks, as Ingold (2007b, 2011) argued, that better capture the dynamic convergence of forces involved in living.

As an alternative to object biographies, we can capture this mobility over time with the concept of object itineraries. “Itineraries” are the routes by which things circulate in and out of places where they come to rest or are active. Examining object itineraries requires consideration of technologies for circulation; transformations that happen along the way; and the value of circulating objects for the production and reshaping of relations among humans, nonhumans, and other forces. Treating things as active in transit puts even partial and collective object histories into context as segments of potentially unending itineraries that shape space and enable action.

Object itineraries extend backward to incorporate the sources from which materials came and forward to incorporate the conversion of wholes into fragments or assemblages (Harris 2013:177–179; see Blair, chapter 5, Gillespie, chapter 3, Roddick, chapter 7, this volume). Even when we cannot be sure of the entire route, seeking to trace a thing’s itineraries forces us to ask where it came from and where it might be going and stops us from ignoring the current segment of its itinerary or from treating that segment as discontinuous from its past. The connections composed by things circulating at a given time, transformed into itineraries, unfold in time. Object itineraries reveal the effects of things in motion without demanding that we reduce things to the status of quasi-human agents. Things in motion make things happen, and traces of their effects are visible all along their journeys.

Itineraries have a collective aspect: whereas each individual object follows a unique path over time, segments of similar routes may be followed by multiple things. When archaeologists link segments of different object lives to create a biography, what we end up with is a history that may not correspond to any specific instances of the group of things on which it was built. Itineraries, in contrast, have a life and reality of their own, as routes that can be followed by individual or multiple objects. The object biography has significance only as a typifying or particularistic aspect of the

material thing; the itinerary traces things through time and space and is an analytic object in its own right, something more than mere connections between places.

ITINERARIES AS THINGS IN MOTION

Ethnographic studies traditionally treat objects that have retained their integrity as wholes or, at most, have accrued marks of use that contribute to their biography or renown. Archaeological investigation, although including such complete objects, more commonly involves the recovery of things in pieces: fragmented, concentrated in some places, dispersed in others. Archaeologists have shown how even broken things can create places with histories that affect the course of events (Chapman 2000a; Joyce 2008; Joyce and Pollard 2010).

Every fragmentary or whole thing is encountered at a place on its itinerary, a spatial and temporal locale whose specific character and particular effects it helps to create (Joyce 2012a). Glass beads made in European factories have one set of agential potentials in the cities where they were made, another as they changed hands in encounters between Europeans and indigenous people, and yet another as they were arranged in assemblages with other beads (Blair, chapter 5, this volume). Gathered together in a group at La Venta, a series of stone objects condenses particular forms of politics and specific relations between humans living there that are different from, but comparable to, the politics that condense when the same things are reassembled in a museum exhibit (Gillespie, chapter 3, this volume). Further, each museum exhibit in which these things are assembled has different agential possibilities.

This way of looking at the stops along an object itinerary as active relates the itinerary to a concept of site promoted by geographers interested in how locales come to have agential possibility. In this sense, a site is an "event-space" composed of "aggregating and dispersing bodies," in motion, emergent (Woodward, Jones, and Marston 2012:204). Things and parts of things aggregate in an emergent site and disperse from it to other locales (see also Harris 2013:179–180). Each site itself is active.

This connection of things with place, the sense that their meaning or potential for action is inflected by their coming to rest in specific places, is obscured or not attended to by the concept of object biography. The concept of object itineraries, in contrast, insists that things have not just a chronological but also a simultaneously unfolding spatial trajectory (Joyce 2012a, 2012b).

Object itinerary integrates in a single framework concepts that art

historians, archaeologists, and geologists include, in both contradictory and overlapping ways, under the terms "provenance" and "provenience" (Joyce 2012a). Archaeologists have traditionally defined "provenience" as the original find spot of an object. In contrast, the art historical "provenance" of the same object is normally defined as the chain of possession. Whereas in concept, the chain of ownership should begin with the making of the object, in practice, the provenance of the objects archaeologists study that make their way into art worlds starts with the removal of the object from its context of archaeological recovery. Archaeological scientists and geologists draw another distinction: between object provenience, defined as the find site, and materials provenance, where the original materials were located (Gunderson 1993).

Together, these terms emphasize different locations in the movement of an object over time. Provenience and geological provenance are a fixed point and a defined region, respectively, whereas art historical provenance is a route that the material or the manufactured object follows as it moves from hand to hand. Object itinerary links these different concepts so that we can understand objects as having different kinds of value (archaeological, materials science, aesthetic, art historical) and distinct kinds of effects at different points in a spatial and temporal framework that is shaped by the circulation of some thing.

A most useful aspect of thinking of objects as having itineraries is that it allows and even encourages considering the contemporary engagements of things with researchers and publics as part of things' lives, rather than as a somewhat hazy afterlife following a sharp break between an absolutely distant past and a completely divorced present. Things can be seen as constantly in transit, engaged in the assembly and reassembly of Latourian networks or the sites of geographical flat ontologies.

THINGS IN TRANSIT: A CASE STUDY

Many archaeological terms of reference for distinctive things, the kind that are natural subjects for object biographies, index geographic locations. This suggests an implicit orientation to seeing things as meaningful in part due to the place where they were or are active. For example, certain carved stone vessels manufactured in Honduras between 500 and 1000 AD are called Ulua marble vases (figure 2.1). These are objects whose biographies are best considered in terms of movement and place (Luke 2010; Luke and Tykot 2007).

The name Ulua indexes the specificity of the place where we understand these things to have been crafted into their original form. Yet, that

mid-nineteenth century. In more than 150 years of modern art collecting, expanding their reach throughout the museums of Europe and the Americas, Ulua marble vases assembled entirely new networks unimagined by their pre-Columbian makers or owners (Joyce 2013; Luke 2006, 2007). Leaving this modern circulation out of the story may at first seem harmless. At worst, it might mean that we have created a division between two contexts of research: the first telling us about the past and the second about modernity and its insatiable hunger for novel aesthetic objects. But, as Lynn Meskell (2004) demonstrated for Egyptian archaeological materials, these two parts of object itineraries are intimately connected.

The elevation of Ulua marble vases as objects of primary distinction in ancient societies is made to seem inevitable by their circulation in the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries as artworks. The networks of museums and collectors that formed around these things in this more recent period isolate them from things with which they were associated in previous stages of their journeys. That isolation, or decontextualization, changes the interpretive work that Ulua marble vases can be and are enlisted to do. It restricts the agential possibility of these things in the world today, limiting the kinds of understandings they can foment. It representationally denies some of their past effectiveness. It makes Ulua marble vases into quasi-human agents of a particular kind: singular, hegemonic, authoritative.

Assemblages along the Itineraries of Ulua Marble Vases

Ulua marble vases were not used in isolation in the early stages of their journeys; this framing as solitary works of art is thoroughly a product of contemporary stops on their journeys. These vases are made of a material (marble) that had been in use for 1,500 years when they were produced. Earlier marble vessels had other shapes and histories of production and use that conditioned the creation of Ulua marble vases (Luke et al. 2003). Made between 500 and 1000 AD, Ulua marble vases began as skeuomorphs of polychrome painted pottery vases made at the same time. They were part of networks of production and consumption that also incorporated small-scale ceramic effigies of the larger carved stone vases, but these were produced using a radically different set of technologies: additive rather than subtractive and involving the application of fire rather than the use of sand and water in drilling stone. Ulua marble vases developed in parallel to and in as yet incompletely understood relations with vase carving traditions practiced in workshops in neighboring regions, using different stone and different representational conventions (Joyce 2013).

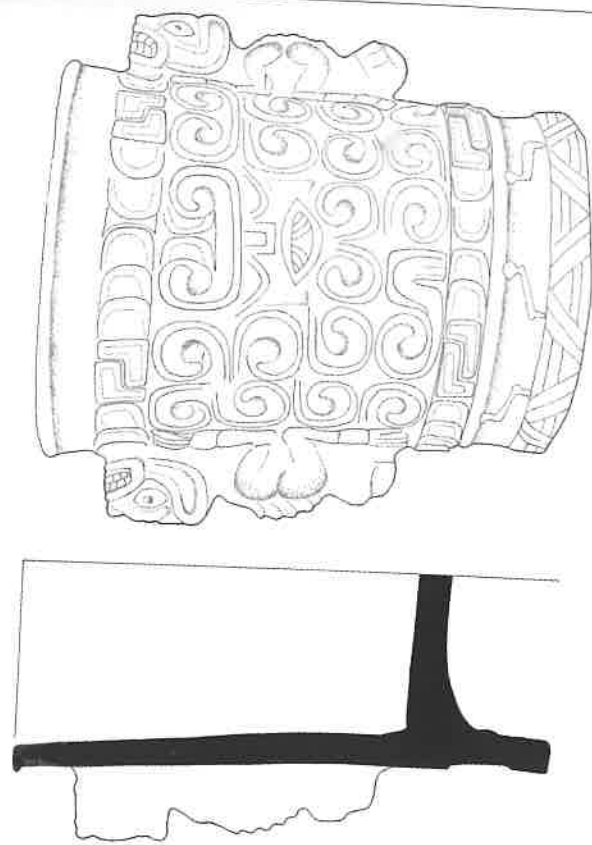


FIGURE 2.1

Ulua marble vase from the Santa Ana site, Ulúa valley. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, NA 5527. Drawing courtesy Christina Luke.

place, the lower Ulúa River valley, is but one point on the itinerary of these objects. It was not the last point on their journey, nor even necessarily the place where these things were encountered in archaeological practice. Part of their significance actually comes from the breadth of the geographic network of places that were connected by their circulation in antiquity (Luke 2010). We can represent their geographic distribution, from Costa Rica to Guatemala, as a map of their circulation, but doing so loses significant information. Each step in the itinerary of each marble vase took place at a particular time. When the temporality of the vases' circulation is considered, instead of a single distribution of a class of objects, we see a pattern of circulation that changes over time, extending in one direction at the beginning of the history of manufacture and shifting to a different region near the end of their period of production (Luke 2010).

Object itineraries do not end, however. So we also should consider a third geographic distribution, produced by the circulation of these things after their recovery in formal and informal excavations beginning in the

marble vases, however, because the modern network defined by their itineraries after 1800 AD does not include any of the other things that would demand consideration of these connections. In the most recent segments of their itineraries, Ulua marble vases have traveled almost alone, accompanied only by unique examples of jade or gold objects that also meet the demands made of the stone vases in modern networks of art collecting.

Marble was used in the Ulúa valley, and more broadly in Honduras, for selected vessel shapes beginning at least by 1000 BC (Luke et al. 2003). The first examples are open bowls, like those used to serve food, and were encountered in similar deposits: as broken pieces in large deposits of vessels presumed to have been used in specific feasting events and intact in cave ossuaries where the bones of multiple individuals were placed together, along with serving vessels understood to have once contained foods offered in mortuary or commemorative rituals.

Ulua marble vases translated a multicolored, painted, fired clay format into a single-color stone format. The making of Ulua polychrome ceramics predated the creation of Classic Ulua marble vases by at least one century and probably two (Joyce 1993). Polychrome ceramics were produced in a range of serving vessel forms. The cylinder vase was not the most common but provided the space for development of the most detailed design programs. In addition to the use of multiple paint colors, Ulua polychrome pottery was distinguished by the substitution of naturalistic motifs, humans and some animals, for the geometric designs previously prevalent on similar vessel shapes.

The Ulua marble vases that are stylistically earliest adopted vessel shapes that were developed in Ulua polychrome pottery by the mid-seventh century: low or tall cylinders with two lugs emerging at opposite sides of the body (in the shape of animal heads), which rested on a low ring base or a high pedestal, the latter sometimes pierced through the incised geometric designs. Instead of filling the exterior walls with bands of human and animal heads in profile or of standing animal and human figures, the makers of the marble vases filled the space with scrolls and other geometric designs framing two frontal human faces.

The recent itineraries that separate Ulua marble vases from their connections to Ulua polychrome pottery remove the relations that each kind of object had to the other during their centuries of production: the interplay of color and white and the circulation across stone and fired clay surfaces of a consistent set of images. For viewers in the modern segment of their itineraries, the significance of Ulua marble vases comes from a global

context: their status as products of the only marble-carving tradition in the Americas. For viewers in the earlier part of their itineraries, which began in the Ulúa valley, their significance was grounded in their relation to other things circulating and visible in the same sites and their use in activities for which these were event-spaces.

Erasure of Early Itineraries of Ulua Marble Vases

Isolating part of their itinerary limits the information these things can convey in the world today. We can appreciate them as technical achievements of note, as aesthetic objects of greater or lesser quality, and as luxuries. Lost with the earlier part of their itinerary is their capacity to convert what otherwise were the most distinctive objects of visual culture of the day, Ulua polychromes, into background.

The break created between their older itineraries and their more recent travels ignores some of the past effectiveness of Ulua marble vases. It is arguable on multiple grounds that the main site of suspected workshops, Travesia, was inhabited by wealthy families striving to create an absolute distinction from others in their own town and its hinterland (Hendon, Joyce, and Lopiparo 2014:101–138; Luke 2012; Luke and Tykot 2007). Ulua marble vases did work in that project: they established a visual and material culture of serving that was not available to everyone, due to restricted access to the material, and control of the support for artisans trained to work with marble (Luke and Tykot 2007).

Ulua marble vases in their modern itineraries are figured like quasi-human agents. They are treated as singular artworks. They are understood to create value, but primarily by their singular aura. Ulua marble vases in their older itineraries were relational agents. As is also true of the Ulua polychromes they worked with and against, Ulua marble vases are highly stereotyped and were produced in multiples. They were part of assemblages, along with Ulua polychromes and other objects, some of them small mold-made ceramic effigies that directly contested the singularity that Ulua marble vases are granted in their modern networks. In their ancient itineraries, they remained effective even as distributed fragments, carefully placed in deposits that marked the beginning or ending of the ceremonial use of specific spaces. Today, fragments of Ulua marble vases serve only as information for chronological or technological study by archaeologists, understood by art collectors and museums as radically different from the unfragmented vases.

Considering the entire itinerary of Ulua marble vases makes it clear that the modern part of their itineraries assembles new networks that are

substantially different from the older networks in which they circulated. This clarifies how different material properties enter into both new and older networks. It also puts in question what actually constitutes the limits of the object, both in terms of the uniqueness implicit in modern art concepts and in terms of the effectiveness of fragments and even simulacra in the past. By admitting that two networks form around vases today—one interested only in the complete vessel as an aesthetic object, the other composed of material scientists and archaeologists equally engaged with fragments—we are led to consider an otherwise easy-to-ignore part of the object itinerary, which predates the object as such: the movement of material from source to workshop.

Marble Geologies in Motion

Wherever Ulua marble vases traveled, they carried with them, in the chemical composition of the marble that was used, a trace of the place where they originated. Luke (2002) undertook extensive field collecting from marble formations both near to and far from the Ulúa valley and also sampled museum objects and fragments to identify these geological sources. Her analyses demonstrate clearly the preferential use of three quarries, all in the mountains around the Ulúa River valley, for the production of Classic Ulua marble vases.

Ulua marble vases are understood as products of at most a few workshops along the Ulúa River, located at sites like Travesia (Luke and Tykot 2007). Variation in the quarries used for slightly different formats of Ulua marble vases can be understood in terms of the waxing and waning of workshops over time (Luke 2002, 2010). The circulation of products from any one marble resource does not simply point back to a deferred and somehow more authentic origin point. The movement of marble from the quarry to the workshop and of vases from the workshop to a succession of users and ultimately into the museums and archaeological research collections where they are found today constituted social and political relations. As marble from a quarry near Santa Rita was carved probably 60–70 km away in or near the town of Travesia and as vases were sent out from the town to more distant locales, the provenance each accrued, its history of circulation, formed specific relations among people, places, and things. The geological and stylistic features we discern, which localize materials and their conversion into these objects, serve as contemporary but only partial traces of these itineraries. Object itineraries provide us with a way to think about cultural production and the entangled social relationships such things produced.

MOVING FORWARD

This chapter sets out a series of arguments for taking itineraries as central to understanding things in motion and the effects they have, from the movement of geological and biological materials into event-spaces where matter processing took place (Woodward, Jones, and Marston 2012:210–212) to the circulation of things and the representations of things in contemporary cosmopolitan circuits (Bauer, chapter 8, this volume). I have followed Appadurai's (1986a:5) exhortation that "we have to follow the things themselves" because "it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context."

It is fair, then, to ask whether the results achieved are due simply to linguistic shifting or a more appropriate analytical concept has been identified. In other words, is "object itinerary," like "object biography," really just a metaphor?

My contention is that it is not. Treating objects as quasi-persons with births, lives, and deaths required the metaphoric construction of afterlives to account for the awkward tendency of things to continue to move forward. Object itineraries are something different: itineraries precisely account for and create models of the work things do, whether being shaped, fragmented, accumulated, stopped, mediated, or reproduced. Itineraries trace connections that are spatial, temporal, material, and consequential.

This work takes place through the assembly, aggregation, and dispersion of materials in sites. It takes place through what Manuel DeLanda described as "a historical process...part of a cosmological, geological, biological, or social history" (interviewed in Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:39). Object biographies restrict the account of the temporality of things to a human-centered schema. Object itineraries open the way to understanding how things work both on the intimate scale of the human life span and on the vast scales of geology, cosmology, and social history.

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continuing circulation of both kinds of objects in modern collecting practices. This chapter could not have been written without the foundation her work has provided.

Note

1. I began exploring a concept of itineraries in conference papers and publications in 2003 (Joyce 2012a, 2012b, 2013). Independently, an "itinerary method" was described based on ethnographic research in China (Desjeux and Lihua 2004). A parallel proposal to supplement object biography with object itinerary (Hahn 2012; Hahn and Weiss 2013a), although similarly inspired, explores a different set of questions

3

Journey's End(?)

The Travels of La Venta Offering 4

Susan D. Gillespie

In the 1980s a compelling metaphor emerged in social science whereby objects, like subjects, were acknowledged to have "social lives" whose trajectories were characterized as "biographies" or life histories (e.g., Appadurai 1986b; Gaitán Ammann 2005; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Hahn and Weiss 2013a; Holtorf 1998; Hoskins 1998, 2006; Joy 2009; Kopytoff 1986; Meskell 2004; Moreland 1999; Overholtzer and Stoner 2011). This approach was consonant with relationist theories developing in the same decade, such as materiality (Miller 1987, 2005a) and actor-network-theory (Latour 1988, 2005), which highlight the roles played by nonhumans in social interactions, thereby challenging the modernist subject-object divide (e.g., Gell 1998; Keane 2006; Olsen 2003, 2007, 2010; Watts 2013; Webmoor and Witmore 2008).

The biographical orientation—changes experienced over time—in these studies coincided with a growing anti-modernist, anti-essentialist ontology according to which all matter is in flux, continuously emerging and undergoing change (e.g., DeLanda 2006; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Hicks 2010; Ingold 2011). Things are to be understood in terms of their histories rather than static properties (Ingold 2011:32). Analysts were thus urged to "follow the things themselves" (Appadurai 1986a:5) or follow the materials (Ingold 2011:213). Following them through their interactions with humans