

December 2013

Editor: Rosita Henry

Special points of interest:

- Progress reports
- Future Research Plans



Fig. 1: Paul Bong with one of his paintings featuring a rainforest shield with the 'scorpion' design.

Photo by Rosita Henry

Inside this issue:

Research at the Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair	1
Research in Germany	2
Research in France	4
Progress Report on PhD Project	5
Shield Designs on Paper and Wood	6
Presentation of Research Results: Conferences in 2012—TransOceanik	7
Research Collaborations & Outcomes	8

Research Project Newsletter 3

ARC Discovery Research in the Tropics

Work on our research project *Objects of Possession: Artefact Transactions in the Wet Tropics of North Queensland, 1870-2013* funded by

the Australian Research Council (ARC Discovery Grant) is progressing well. We report in detail on our work during 2012 in this

newsletter and on our research plans for 2013. See Newsletters 1 & 2 for a background to the project.

Research at the Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair (CIAF) 2012

Field research (17-19 August, 2012) was conducted again this year at the Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair (CIAF). I was joined at CIAF by Trish Barnard, Senior Curator Cultures & Histories, Museum of Tropical Queensland Museum, who is a research associate on the ARC project. Trish was able to provide valuable insights about Aboriginal artists who engage with artefacts to produce contemporary art works—a key area of research focus for the ARC project.

CIAF has proved to be an ideal ethnographic site to make contact with Indigenous artists whose works are of interest in relation to our research questions. The fair is now in its fourth year

and this is the second year we have conducted research at the event for the purposes of our ARC project.

CIAF features artworks from across far north Queensland. We met many artists at the fair whose works are of interest to our project. In relation to rainforest shields, for example, these include Paul Bong, Napoleon Oui and Leonard Andy.

Paul Bong is a Yidinji artist of the Cairns-Babinda area (Fig. 1). He specialises in painted shields, murals, linocuts, batik and silk dyed works. In 1995 he was commissioned by the Federal Airports Corporation for his "Rainforest

Shields" Series.

Leonard Andy is a Djiru artist of the Mission Beach area and a member of the Giringun Aboriginal Art Centre. Leonard informed me, among other things, that he was in the process of painting a rainforest shield using natural ochres like on the shields that the 'old people' made.

Napoleon Oui is an emerging Djabugay artist. All his works refer to the rainforest shield. Each paintings or print features an oval shaped 'boss' in the centre—a distinguishing feature of the traditional rainforest shield.

Rosita Henry

Klaatsch & *German* *Museums*



Fig. 2: Hermann Klaatsch in Sydney, 1907

Continuing Research in Germany: Corinna Erckenbrecht

During 2012 I conducted research on Klaatsch's interesting story as a German (physical) anthropologist, who became a scientific traveller and full-time, knowledgeable collector of cultural artefacts in tropical north Queensland and an entrepreneur and salesman of his collections to German museums and academies (Fig. 2).

I have produced two papers from this research. In my first paper I investigated his various negotiations with German Museums of Ethnology, but also with the Academy of Science in Berlin, which were all very interested in his artefact collection from the Wet Tropics and were willing to pay for or to advance him considerable sums for it.

With no official backing from a university, research institution or sponsor for his Australian trip, and travelling around north Queensland at his own expense, Klaatsch increasingly depended on collecting cultural artefacts that were valuable commodities. Thus, Klaatsch funded his research trip by collecting artefacts, always maintaining sole right of proper-

ty and disposition as the collector. This was quite different to Ursula McConnel, for example, who collected artefacts in addition to her institutionally planned and funded field research.

For my second paper I investigated the socio-historical background and shifting interests behind the artefact collectors in general and the emergence of Museums of Ethnology, universities and academies in Germany that led to the great demand for cultural artefacts from overseas, including from Aboriginal Australia. The main period of artefact acquisition by German museums was from the 1870's until WWI.

During 2012 I was also in touch with Maria Wronski-Friend in Poland to plan a visit to the National Museum of Ethnography in Warsaw where a part of Klaatsch's ethnographic collection is kept today. However, the museum in Warsaw is undergoing major renovation with funds from the European Union, so it was not possible to visit the museum in 2012. However, I hope to do so in 2013.

I also contacted the Museum of Ethnology in Hamburg, because it holds a substantial Klaatsch collection. However, currently the Museum does not allow access to its collections or archival documents. This is a pity because Klaatsch's material is a rich resource. Klaatsch wrote long letters to all his friends and colleagues, took notes, made drawings and also took many photographs.

In some cases artefacts which are held in museum collections in Germany today can be identified in Klaatsch's photos as this example shows: The photo (Fig. 3) was taken by Klaatsch at an Aboriginal camp near Aloomba in January 1905. The shield held by the man sitting on the far left is in the Australian collection of the Museum of Ethnology in Cologne today (Fig. 4).

Thus, Klaatsch's photographs, taken more than a hundred years ago, are an excellent source of information on particular artefacts held in museums today.

Corinna Erckenbrecht



Fig. 3: Klaatsch's photo of an Aboriginal camp on the banks of a creek somewhere near Aloomba during his third expedition to the Bellenden Kerr Range in January 1905.



Fig. 4: The above shield is held in the Australian collection at the Museum of Ethnology in Cologne. It is the same rainforest shield that is on the far left in the photo Klaatsch took in Aloomba in 1905 (Fig 3).

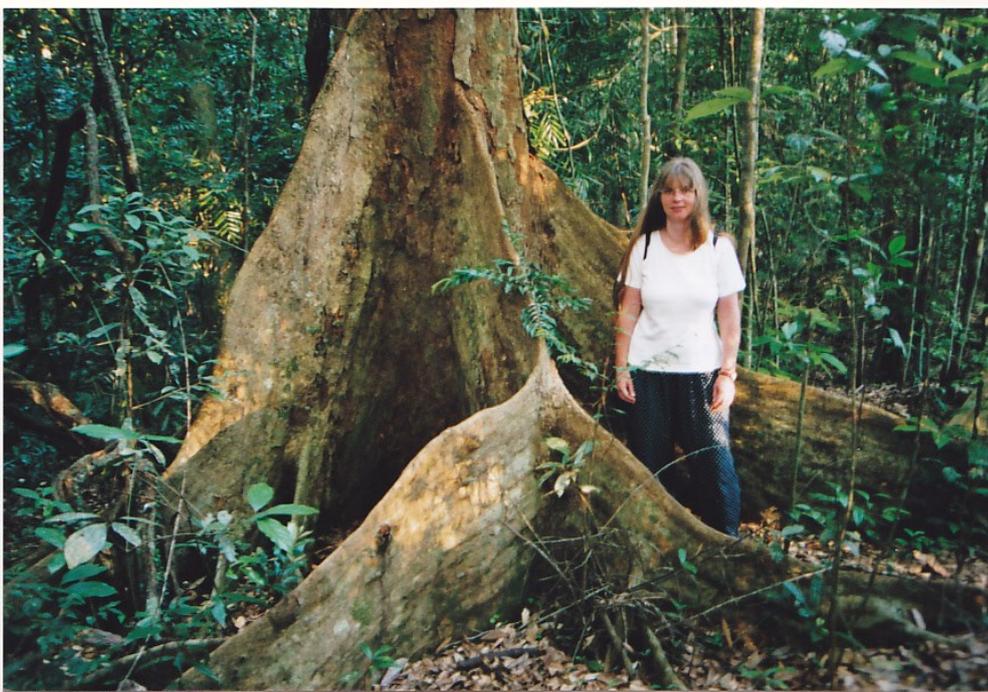


Fig. 5: Corinna Erckenbrecht during her travels in the tropical rainforest (somewhere near Malanda) in 2006

*Tropical
Travels*

Thozet & Montefiori

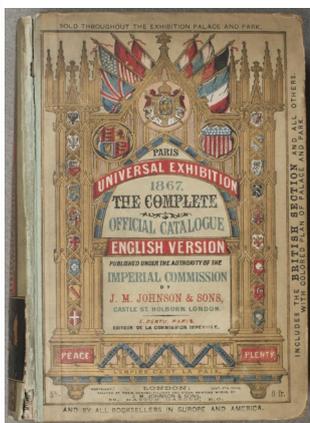


Fig. 6: Paris Universal Exhibition Catalogue

Source of image:

<http://libraries.mit.edu/sites/collections/vail-collection/topics/popular-science/worlds-fair/>

Research on Collections in France

Arnaud Morvan (Université Bordeaux 2) who is one of our research associates in France wrote a report for the ARC project on Anthelme Thozet and his collections in French Museums.

Anthelme Thozet was a French-Australian botanist and ethnographer who spent much of his life in Rockhampton. Between the early 1860s' and 1878, he sent Queensland Aboriginal artefacts, human remains, photographs and documentation to French and Australian museums. Today Thozet's material is shared between the Musée des Confluences (Lyon), The Musée du quai Branly (Paris), and the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle. "While most of his material comes from central Queensland his personal archives provide a valuable insight into the history of collecting

Aboriginal artefacts in the entire state of Queensland, from Cape York to Brisbane" (Morvan 2012).

Another of our research associates in France, Jessica De Lary Healy (Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale, Paris) conducted research on North Queensland material in the Musée du quai Branly (MQB) collections. Jessica has written a report for the ARC project documenting the fascinating history of the movement and of artefacts and transactions between museums in France. She notes that most of the Queensland artefacts in the MQB collections originate from two former Parisian museum collections (the Musée de l'Homme and the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie). These in turn had inherited batches of

Australian artefacts from the Musée d'Archeologie Nationale (MAN). MAN's earliest items from Australia were acquired directly from the NSW stall after the closing of the 1867 Universal Exhibition in Paris (Fig. 6). Fifty-five artefacts, including a rainforest shield, are recorded as having been donated by E.L. Montefiori after the exhibition closed. Montefiori (1820-1894) emigrated to Australia in 1843 and later became the Director of the Art Gallery of NSW (De Lary Healy 2012).

The ARC team is planning further research on the connections between Australian collections in British and European Museums and the Universal Exhibitions in Paris and London.



Fig. 7: Roy Gibson, at Emmagen Creek, Cape Tribulation - Bloomfield Road

Progress Report on PhD Project: Bård Aaberge

This year I have had the good fortune of carrying out fieldwork in Mossman Gorge and Buru (China Camp). Both the new and old Kuku Yalanji Dreamtime Walk tracks have been mapped using a GPS unit under the expert guidance of Roy Gibson (Fig. 7).

We recorded culturally significant sites as well as recording various trees and plants and their traditional use. Using a free GIS program (QGIS) I produced a map containing all this information to be used for the training of new Yalanji tour guides. More recently, I have started similar work with CJ Fischer up in Buru.

As part of my project I have also started filming this year – Roy Gibson sharing stories and knowledge at various locations, including Mossman Gorge, Cape Tribulation, Wujal Wujal, Emmagen Creek and Shipton Flats. The entire official opening of the new Mossman Gorge Centre was also captured on film.

Terrence Gibson and I have been filming snippets from the new guided walk at the Gorge and guide Bilngamu in action. Together we have been learning how to use a top notch camera and to edit film using Final Cut Pro X.

Stories from CJ Fischer

were also filmed at Buru. In the beginning of 2013 I aim to film Harold Tayley teach traditional knowledge in language, probably at his camp up at Shipton Flats. As soon as I have the required footage I will start editing and eventually produce a DVD for the people participating.

Another important part of my PhD project is locating and accessing museum artefacts and archived knowledge collected from Yalanji people since the time of colonisation. I have made a start of this by compiling archival information (mainly from Queensland Protector of Aborigines W.E. Roth's material) regarding stone axes for Mossman Gorge Centre artefact displays. I have also returned Ursula McConnel's (1931) journal article "A Moon legend from the Bloomfield River" to CJ Fischer and his family at Buru. McConnel recorded a detailed account of the Gidja (Moon) Dreaming story which originates from Buru, travelling down the river before the story ends up at Cowie Beach, south of Wujal Wujal and north of Cape Tribulation.

In November, we had a workshop with IT advisor Dianna Madden (JCU Townsville) on how to best make all this historical

documentation, images, and photos of artefacts available to Yalanji people. Yalanji tour guides and artists participated in the workshop giving advice on how to best facilitate this. From the meeting, it was suggested we make a clickable map from where relevant documents would be accessed. Another meeting will take place in the first half of 2013.

Finally, in early December, I travelled to Norway, my country of birth, to give a presentation titled *Aboriginal Dreamings and Existence: Søren Kierkegaard, Anthropology and the Paradox of Truth* at an anthropological conference (ESfO) in Bergen. In my presentation I will talk about my experience of encountering dubu (spirits or ghosts) and how living with the Yalanji for ten months in 2002 changed me personally. I hope to show how such personal experiences are important when anthropologists try to understand the position the Dreaming has for Kuku Yalanji and other Indigenous Australians.

Bård Aaberge

Moon Dreaming

*NSW
Premier's
Prize
for
Australian
History*

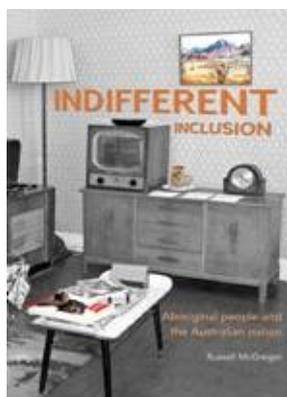


Fig. 8: Russell McGregor's book, winner of the 2012 NSW Premier's Prize for Australian History; shortlisted for the 2012 Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History

Shield Designs on Paper and Wood

In early December 2012 I went to Canberra to conduct research in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and in the National Library of Australia.

One of the most interesting items I found was a collection of nineteen paintings of shield designs by a Yidinj man named Fred Mundraby from Yarrabah in about 1941. The originals were painted on paper sheets approximately 40cm x 40cm and had been sent to an amateur anthropologist in Tasmania by the mission superintendent.

A little digging through the documents revealed that Fred Mundraby had a few years earlier provided the anthropologist Ursula McConnell with actual shields he had painted in traditional Yidinj designs. In her 1935 article, 'Inspiration and Design in Aboriginal Art', McConnell rendered his Yidinj name more accurately as Fred Manding'ga:rabai.

The striking thing is that Fred Mundraby's shield designs painted on paper are very different to the designs he executed on the traditional medium, wooden shields. The painted designs on paper are still beautiful works of art, but they are much more realistic in style than the typically

geometric-abstract patterns painted on the actual shields.

A project for the near future is to write an article comparing Fred Mundraby's paper and wooden shield designs, making some suggestions on why the designs in the two media were so different.

Earlier in the year (in June) I gave two public lectures on science in colonial North Queensland, a large part of which was devoted to some of the ethnographic collectors we're looking at in this project, such as Carl Lumholtz, Archibald Meston and Walter Roth. The lectures were part of a series hosted by James Cook University, and will be published next year in a book that brings together other lectures in the series.

Some of the work I've been doing within the pro-

ject has led me into wider research into the history of the North Queensland rainforests – an essential part of the contextualisation necessary in historical work. In that vein, I've submitted an article on changing perceptions of the North Queensland Wet tropics to the *Queensland Historical Atlas*.

More tightly bound to the project, I've almost completed an article called 'Making the Rainforest Aboriginal'. It looks at the changing ways in which European people represented the Aboriginal inhabitants of the rainforest, from the 1840s to the 1980s.

I'm also working with Maureen Fuary on an article entitled 'Protectors and Collectors', which compares the careers of Archibald Meston and Walter Roth.

Russell McGregor



Fig. 9: Russell McGregor receiving the 2012 NSW Premier's Prize for Australian History from the NSW Minister for the Arts George Souris. (Photo courtesy of State Library of NSW).

Presentation of Research Results: Conferences 2012



We presented some of the results of our research at two conferences this year. Both conferences were attended as part of our contribution to an international collaborative research network, entitled *TransOceanik*. The network is a collaboration between social scientists at JCU and at various institutions in France (CNRS, EHESS, Collège de France). Several of the Chief Investigators of our ARC team are part of this international network, which is headed by Professors Barbara Glowczewski and Ton Otto.

In August, 2012, I presented a paper written with Shelley Greer, entitled *Designs of Dominance and Difference* at an International conference organized by The Cairns Institute, in collaboration with the Universities of Aarhus (Denmark) and Bergen (Norway) and *Trans-Oceanik*. The confer-

ence was organised by Steffen Dalsgaard (Aarhus), Bruce Kapferer (Bergen) and Ton Otto (JCU).

In the paper, we focus on values attributed to designs painted on rainforest shields and bicornual baskets, now held as artefacts in museums all over the world.

In September 2012, I presented a paper entitled *Designs on the Future: Aboriginal Painted Shields of Tropical North Queensland* at an international conference organised by *Trans-Oceanik* and hosted by the Laboratory "Textes,

langues, communications dans les espaces créolophones et franco-phones" (LCF) and the Observatory of societies of the Indian Ocean (OSOI), at the Université of la Réunion (French island). The paper was written in collaboration with fellow ARC investigators, Shelley Greer, Trish Barnard and Bård Aaberge.

In the paper we discuss the historical ethnographic context of the production and use of the shields and explore their heritage value. We particularly focus on the significance of the shields and their designs for contemporary Aboriginal artists (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12: Shields by Aboriginal Artist, Michael Anning, on display in the Cairns Convention Centre; photo by Trish Barnard

Trans Oceanik

Fig 10 (Left) and Fig 11 (Below):

Rosita Henry at the Trans-Oceanik Conference in La Reunion 3 September, 2012



Research Collaborations

In April 2012, members of our research team met with Dr John Carty (Research Fellow, Research School of Humanities and the Arts, ANU) and Dr Jay Arthur (Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program, National Museum of Australia). John and Jay are working on an ARC project with the National Museum of Australia and the British Museum - *Engaging Objects: Indigenous Communities, Museum Collections and the Representation of Indigenous Histories*. They visited Townsville and Cairns to introduce themselves and the aspects of their project to us and to consult with Indigenous people in our region.

As Dr Carty explained, the *Engaging Objects* project involves the development of an Exhibition that will display

in Australia for the first time objects held in the British Museum. Some of the objects that will be included in the Exhibition are from the Wet Tropics region and of interest to us in relation to our ARC project.

Other researchers working on the *Engaging Objects* ARC project include Professor Howard Morphy (Director, Research School of Humanities and the Arts), Dr Ian Coates (Senior Curator, National Museum of Australia), and Dr Lissant Bolton (Keeper, Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, British Museum).

We are very pleased to have been able to meet with Dr Carty and Dr Arthur to discuss potential links between the two ARC projects.

We considered ways in which we might be able to collaborate, for example by organising a joint conference session or a colloquium where we could share the results of our respective research endeavours.

During 2012, we also engaged in further exchange with Robert J. Foster (Professor of Anthropology and Visual & Cultural Studies, Department of Anthropology, University of Rochester, New York). Bob Foster is conducting research on the collector PGT Black, who also collected objects from the Wet Tropics region. Prof. Foster generously sent us a copy of the draft catalog for the Aboriginal component of the PGT Black collection. It was done in the 1990s by Kevin Smith, a former curator at the Buffalo Museum of Science.

Project Research Outcomes, 2012: Publications & Reports

Henry, Rosita, Otto, Ton and Wood, Mike (Submitted 2012) *Ethnographic Artefacts and Value Transformations*. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* vol. 4

McGregor, Russell (Submitted 2012). *Perceptions of the Rainforests of North Queensland*. *Queensland Historical Atlas*.

De Largy-Healy, Jessica 2012. *North Queensland Objects in the Musée du quai Branly*. A Report compiled for the ARC Project: *Objects of Possession: Artefact Transactions in the Wet Tropics of North Queensland, 1870 -2013*. Paris

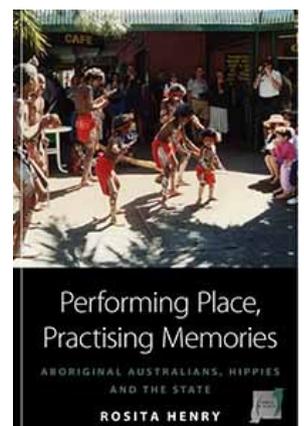
Morvan, Arnaud 2012. *Anthelme Thozet Collections and Archives in French Museums*. Report prepared for the ARC Project: *Objects of Possession: Artefact Transactions in the Wet Tropics of North Queensland, 1870 -2013*. Bordeaux.

Several other articles are in preparation for publication, including the papers presented at Conferences (see p. 7).

Engaging with Objects & Engaging with People

Fig. 13 : Rosita Henry's book published 2012:

[http://
www.berghahnbooks.co
m/title.php?
row-](http://www.berghahnbooks.com/title.php?row-)





CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

A/Prof. Rosita Henry
School of Arts and Social Sciences
James Cook University
Townsville, Qld 4811
Rosita.Henry@jcu.edu.au
Phone: 07 47814231
OR

Russell.McGregor@jcu.edu.au
Michael.Wood@jcu.edu.au
Ton.Otto@jcu.edu.au
Shelley.Greer@jcu.edu.au
Maureen.Fuary@jcu.edu.au



**Fig. 14: Choir performing at the Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair, 2012
Photograph by Rosita Henry**

References

- McConnel, U. (1931). A Moon Legend from the Bloomfield River, North Queensland. *Oceania*, 2(1), 9-25.
- McConnel, U.H. (1935). Inspiration and Design in Aboriginal art. *Art in Australia* 59: 49-68.

Season's Greetings

**We will be on the
Web soon!**