

The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections

Edited by Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and
Louise Hamby



MELBOURNE
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PRESS
An imprint of Melbourne University Publishing Limited
187 Grattan Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia
mup-info@unimelb.edu.au
http://www.mup.com.au

First published 2008
Text © Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby 2008
Design and typography © Melbourne University Publishing Ltd 2008

This book is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968* and subsequent amendments, no part may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means or process whatsoever without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Every attempt has been made to locate the copyright holders for material quoted in this book. Any person or organisation that may have been overlooked or misattributed may contact the publisher.

Designed by Phil Campbell
Typeset by J&M Typesetting
Printed in Australia by the Design and Print Centre, The University of Melbourne

Warning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should exercise caution when viewing this publication as it may contain images of deceased persons.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

The makers and making of indigenous australian museum collections:/ editors Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen, Louise Hamby.

9780522855685 (pbk.)
9780522855692 (pdf.)

Includes index.
Bibliography.

Ethnological museums and collections--Australia
Aboriginal Australians—Material culture.
Aboriginal Australians—Museums.
Torres Strait Islanders—Museums.
Torres Strait Islanders—Material culture.
Museums—Social aspects—Australia.

305.8991507494



MUSEUMVICTORIA

Contents

Preface	v
List of Plates	vi
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Maps	xii

Introduction	1
<i>Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby</i>	

Part I: Collecting in Its Institutional Context

1. Collections as Artefacts: The Making and Thinking of Anthropological Museum Collections	29
<i>Leonn Satterthwait</i>	
2. Reflections in a Cracked Mirror: What Collections Representing 'Them' Can Say about 'Us' and the Role of Museum Collections	61
<i>Richard Robins</i>	
3. An Ark of Aboriginal Relics: The Collecting Practices of Dr LP Winterbotham	76
<i>Daniel Leo</i>	

Part II: Collecting under the Influence of Evolutionism

4. Gentlemen Collectors: The Port Phillip District, 1835–1855	113
<i>Elizabeth Willis</i>	
5. 'Annexing All I Can Lay Hands On': Baldwin Spencer as Ethnographic Collector	141
<i>John Mulvaney</i>	
6. The Man Who Collected Everything: WE Roth	163
<i>Kate Kahn</i>	
7. The Australian Aboriginal Collection and the Berlin Ethnological Museum	190
<i>Janice Lally</i>	
8. Talking into the Wind: Collectors on the Cooper Creek, 1890–1910	206
<i>Chris Nobbs</i>	
9. The Dynamics of the Collector–Curator Relationship: Interpreting Henry Hillier's Central Australian Collections	235
<i>Ian Coates</i>	

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 10. | ‘Your Obedient Servant’: The John Tunney Collection
at the Western Australian Museum
<i>Ross Chadwick</i> | 255 |
| 11. | Professionals and Amateurs: Different Histories of
Collecting in the National Ethnographic Collection
<i>David Kaus</i> | 281 |

Part III: Before It Is Too Late

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| 12. | The ‘Idea behind the Artefact’: Norman Tindale’s
Early Years as a Salvage Ethnographer
<i>Philip Jones</i> | 315 |
| 13. | The Reluctant Collector: Lloyd Warner
<i>Louise Hamby</i> | 355 |
| 14. | Tons and Tons of Valuable Material: The Donald Thomson
Collection
<i>Lindy Allen</i> | 387 |
| 15. | Only Sticks and Bark: Ursula McConnel—Her Collecting
and Collection
<i>Anne Perusco</i> | 419 |
| 16. | The Art of Collecting: Charles Percy Mountford
<i>Sally May</i> | 446 |
| 17. | Ethnographic and Archaeological Collections by
FD McCarthy in the Australian Museum
<i>Val Attenbrow</i> | 472 |

Part IV: Transformed Collecting

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| 18. | ‘I Did Not Set Out to Make a Collection’: The Ronald and
Catherine Berndt Collection at the Berndt Museum of
Anthropology
<i>John Stanton</i> | 511 |
| 19. | ‘The Woman with Men’s Business’: Helen Wurm
<i>Margie West</i> | 537 |
| 20. | Aesthete and Scholar: Two Complementary Influences on
the Kluge–Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University
of Virginia
<i>Margo Smith</i> | 556 |
| | Contributors | 580 |
| | Index | 583 |

Preface

This volume arises from a symposium held at Museum Victoria in February 2006 titled *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*. The symposium marked the final phase of an ARC Linkage Grant (LP0347221) between the Australian National University and Museum Victoria from 2003–06 titled *Anthropological and Aboriginal Perspectives on the Donald Thomson Collection: Material Culture, Collecting and Identity*, held by Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby. A principal aim of the project was to analyse the formation, structure and composition of the Arnhem Land component of the Donald Thomson Collection. Given the significance of museum collections to the image and understanding of Aboriginal life in the past, and the absence of any comparative analysis of how and why the many collections of their material culture we have today were formed, we felt that a symposium comparing the work and collections of Donald Thomson with the makers and making of other Indigenous Australian museum collections would be revealing. We were very pleased by the enormous enthusiasm for the idea among museum curators and researchers—with hindsight it seems the idea came at a strategic moment, tapping into a pent-up seam of scholarship.

Neither the symposium nor this publication would have been possible without the enthusiastic support of many people at Museum Victoria, particularly the staff of the Indigenous Cultures Department. Dr Robin Hirst, Director, Collections, Research and Exhibitions, lent his full support to this ARC Linkage Grant, the first within the museum's Indigenous Cultures Department. Lindy Allen, Senior Curator for Northern Australian Collections at the museum, provided the commitment and drive needed to get the original grant off the ground and to make the symposium a great success. We would also like to thank Mary Morris, Melanie Raberts, Rosemary Wrench and the many other people who helped behind the scenes, as well as the paper givers and other participants; and Melanie Raymond for her assistance with the publication.

List of Plates

- Plate 1.1: Language groups in the Normanton area
- Plate 2.1: Circular letter from Hamlyn-Harris appealing for collections
- Plate 3.1: The museum in Winterbotham's suburban house
- Plate 3.2: The circular seeking Aboriginal artefacts
- Plate 3.3: Winterbotham recording Willie Mackenzie in early 1950
- Plate 4.1: Bag collected by Charles Joseph La Trobe before 1842
- Plate 4.2: Shield collected by Charles Joseph La Trobe before 1842
- Plate 4.3: Shield collected by Charles Joseph La Trobe before 1842
- Plate 4.4: 'Native drawing on bark', Dja Dja Wurrung, 1854
- Plate 4.5: Schematic drawing of the bark drawing in Plate 4.7
- Plate 4.6: 'Native drawing on bark', Dja Dja Wurrung, 1854
- Plate 4.7: Schematic drawing of the bark drawing in Plate 4.10
- Plate 5.1: WB Spencer, 1901
- Plate 5.2: Early bark painting from Oenpelli, 1912
- Plate 5.3: Tunga collected on Melville Island, 1912
- Plate 6.1: Walter Edmund Roth in outback northern Queensland
- Plate 6.2: Roth's illustration of the cat's cradle game
- Plate 6.3: Partially completed, crescent-shaped basket
- Plate 6.4: Filed-down piece of iron made into a scraper
- Plate 6.5: Large edge-ground stone axe with cane handle
- Plate 6.6: Doll with bark-fibre skirt collected from Mapoon, 1903
- Plate 7.1: Human figure probably collected from Ramahyuck Mission
- Plate 8.1: Mounted Constable Samuel Gason
- Plate 8.2: Samuel Gason's map of tribal boundaries
- Plate 8.3: Otto Siebert at Bethesda Mission
- Plate 8.4: Siebert preaching the Gospel to Aboriginal people
- Plate 8.5: Siebert often visited this camp at Pampurina
- Plate 8.6: Siebert's collection at Bethesda Mission, c. 1902
- Plate 8.7: *Pirra* or carrying dish, Museum der Weltkulturen
- Plate 8.8a: Boomerang-shaped wooden board used to explain 'legends'
- Plate 8.8b: A *mariwiri* featuring 'swan tracks with grass on the toes'
- Plate 8.9: The Mudlunga dancers performing

- Plate 8.10: 'The Mudlunga dancers ... came warlike into the camp.'
- Plate 8.11: The *wolkadara* or forked stick used in the Mudlunga ceremony
- Plate 9.1: Henry 'Harry' Hillier
- Plate 10.1: Tags used by JT Tunney during his later trips
- Plate 10.2: Breakdown 240 kilometres from Wyndham, 1902
- Plate 10.3: An example of the portrait images taken by Tunney, 1899
- Plate 10.4: A 'King River' man, Wyndham, c. 1898
- Plate 11.1: Sir Colin MacKenzie, 1930s
- Plate 11.2: The Australian Institute of Anatomy, 1930s
- Plate 11.3: Herbert Basedow, about 1925
- Plate 11.4: Edmund Milne next to the stump marking a grave
- Plate 11.5: Edmund Milne at festivities marking the grave site
- Plate 11.6: Basedow interviewing Danbidlell, a Yandruwandha man, 1919
- Plate 11.7: Hut decked with porcupine grass, Arltunga district, 1920
- Plate 11.8: Another view of the shelter scene
- Plate 12.1: Tindale's anthropological baptism after falling overboard, 1921
- Plate 12.2: Ingura men making bark drawings and painting spearthrowers
- Plate 12.3: Church Missionary Society baptism in the Roper River, 1921
- Plate 12.4: Wet season camp at Emerald River, Groote Eylandt, 1922
- Plate 12.5: Tilkoana, a Flinders Island woman, making a string bag, 1927
- Plate 12.6: Rock-shelter, Bathurst Head, occupied by Tindale and Hale in 1927
- Plate 12.7: Aijene in mourning wearing fishing nets, 1927
- Plate 13.1: Studio portrait of Lloyd Warner taken in the 1950s
- Plate 13.2: Harry Makarrwala from Milingimbi wearing checked cloth
- Plate 13.3: Lloyd Warner at Milingimbi
- Plate 13.4: Makarrata at Milingimbi

- Plate 13.5: Makarrata at Milingimbi
- Plate 13.6: Bark painting from Milingimbi, given to Radcliffe-Brown
- Plate 13.7: Painted bark coffin
- Plate 13.8: Coloured lantern slide held at the Field Museum
- Plate 13.9: Rraywala recording songs for Warner on a wax cylinder
- Plate 13.10: Incised resin with Gupapuyngu honeybee design
- Plate 13.11: Nupurra Garrawurra and Lloyd Warner at Milingimbi
- Plate 14.1: Willie Webb and Lena in single outrigger, 1928
- Plate 14.2: Gladys Thomson at Cape Keerweer, 1933
- Plate 14.3: Specimen tag and object tag from Cape York Peninsula
- Plate 14.4: Neck ornament containing infant's cord
- Plate 14.5: A possum-fur apron, mada-mada, from Roper River
- Plate 14.6: Macassan prau painting by Wonggu
- Plate 14.7: Thomson in base camp at Gaartji
- Plate 14.8: A sophisticated fish 'fence', 1937
- Plate 15.1: Ursula McConnel, anthropologist, c. 1936
- Plate 15.2: Billy Mammus and Charley Doctor, c. 1927
- Plate 15.3: Aboriginal women prepared for ceremony, c. 1928
- Plate 16.1: Members of the Warburton Range Expedition, 1935
- Plate 16.2: American–Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1948
- Plate 16.3: Biro advertisement featuring the AASEAL
- Plate 16.4: Mountford and Professor John Bishop
- Plate 17.1: Fred McCarthy and others
- Plate 17.2: Tools and implements used by Fish Creek Group, Oenpelli
- Plate 17.3: Fishing with dip-nets at Fish Creek, near Oenpelli
- Plate 17.4: Arnhem Land, snail-shell yam slicers, Umbakumba
- Plate 17.5: Arnhem Land children's shell dolls
- Plate 17.6: Bark paintings from Milingimbi, Groote Eylandt and Yirrkala
- Plate 17.7: Objects incorporating or made from introduced materials
- Plate 17.8: Arnhem Land archaeological material
- Plate 18.1: Ronald and Catherine Berndt at the Anthropology Research Museum
- Plate 18.2: Ronald Berndt mounting an exhibition of Aboriginal art, 1957

- Plate 18.3: Ronald Berndt examining a crayon drawing from Yirrkala, 1947
- Plate 18.4: Ronald Berndt sitting in Buramarra's camp, Elcho Island, 1964
- Plate 18.5: Catherine and Ronald walking in Sydney, c. 1940
- Plate 19.1: Helen Wurm working with a Tiwi woman, Melville Island
- Plate 19.2: Helen Wurm setting up to record a story about ancestral activity
- Plate 20.1: Ed Ruhe holding Yirawala bark upon receipt of Spence Collection, 1966
- Plate 20.2: Ed Ruhe at *Masterpieces of Australian Bark Painting*, New York
- Plate 20.3: Wolpa Wanambi completing bark painting at Yirrkala, 1996
- Plate 20.4: Pansy Nakamarra Stewart painting a large canvas
- Plate 20.5: John Kluge and University of Virginia president John Casteen

List of Tables

- Table 3.1: Sample of correspondents
- Table 6.1: Artefacts collected by WE Roth from Cape York Peninsula
- Table 6.2: People who donated artefacts to WE Roth
- Table 10.1: Objects collected by Tunney in WA and NT
- Table 11.1: Amateur collectors and their occupations
- Table 11.2: Comparison of Basedow and Milne Collections with others
- Table 11.3: Comparison of Milne's Collection from western NSW with Dunbar
- Table 15.1: Types of spears collected by Ursula McConnel from western Cape York Peninsula
- Table 16.1: Objects collected by the AASEAL
- Table 16.2: Places from which objects were collected
- Table 18.1 Dates, places and broad categories collected by R & C Berndt
- Table 18.2 Dates and type categories of Australian Aboriginal items collected
- Table 18.3 Dates and type categories of Papua New Guinean items collected
- Table 18.4 Dates and type categories of Asian items collected
- Table 20.1: Contents of the Kluge-Ruhe Collection of University of Virginia

List of Figures

- Figure 1.1: Percentage of items in the object categories represented in Roth's Normanton collection
- Figure 1.2: Comparison of Roth's Normanton collection and Black's vocabularies
- Figure 1.3: Collection formation as a sequence of selective events
- Figure 2.1: Yearly acquisition trends for Queensland Museum's ethnology collections, 1880–1932
- Figure 2.2: Comparison of acquisition of physical anthropology specimens with bags and baskets from Queensland
- Figure 2.3: Acquisition numbers by decade for the Queensland ethnology collections
- Figure 2.4: Comparison of trends in acquisition of Queensland and Melanesian artefacts
- Figure 2.5: Comparison of trends in acquisitions from Australia and Polynesia
- Figure 2.6: Comparison of trends in Northern Territory collections
- Figure 2.7: Comparison of acquisitions of bark paintings
- Figure 2.8: Comparison of artefacts in Queensland collections
- Figure 12.1: Numbers and types of artefacts collected by NB Tindale at Groote Eylandt, Roper River and Princess Charlotte Bay
- Figure 13.1: Objects in the Warner Collection
- Figure 14.1: Origin of objects in the Donald Thomson Collection.
- Figure 14.2: Types of objects in the Donald Thomson Arnhem Land Collection
- Figure 14.3: Numbers of objects by group from eastern Arnhem Land
- Figure 15.1: Provenance of the Ursula McConnel Collection, 1927–34
- Figure 15.2: Comparison of Ursula McConnel and Donald Thomson's Collections
- Figure 17.1: Eastern Australia locations where FD McCarthy collected stone artefacts and undertook excavations
- Figure 17.2: Number of stone artefacts collected each year in eastern Australia by FD McCarthy, 1930–65
- Figure 20.1: Paintings in the Kluge–Ruhe Collection
- Figure 20.2: Artefacts in the Kluge–Ruhe Collection

Maps

Wik (bold italics) = language or tribal name



Queensland



Western Australia



CLIVE HILLIKER • THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Northern Territory



South Australia



New South Wales and Victoria