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MATERIAL CULTURE COLLECTIONS AND RESEARCH FROM TORRES STRAIT

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Collections of Torres Strait Islander material culture make up a small percentage of Australian museum and gallery collections. While museums in the eastern states hold some important collections, it is overseas where the most significant historical collections of Torres Strait Islander material culture are located. This paper provides an overview of the Australian collections and selected overseas holdings. Summaries of all major Australian museum and art gallery collections are provided, highlighting significant individual collections. The second part of this paper surveys the published literature dealing with Torres Strait Islander material culture. □ *Material culture, museum collections, Torres Strait*

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Recent years have seen, after several decades of little interest, a renewed interest in the material culture of Torres Strait Islander people. One man, Alfred C. Haddon, is credited with collecting about one third of the artefacts from Torres Strait held in the museums surveyed and is also responsible for the majority of published historical information on Torres Strait material culture. This paper examines Torres Strait Island collections, including that of Haddon, held in museums throughout the world and discusses the main research that has been conducted on Islander material culture.

THE HADDON COLLECTION

Haddon began his career as a zoologist but, during a field trip to the Torres Strait in 1888-89, became interested in Islander life and customs. After this trip he devoted his academic life to anthropology (Haddon, 1890). Haddon felt that the Islanders warranted more serious investigation and so organised a multidisciplinary expedition, known officially as 'The Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits', which took place in 1898. Encompassing ethnology, physical anthropology, psychology, linguistics, sociology, ethnomusicology and anthropogeography, the expedition acquired a large collection of artefacts and a voluminous body of information about Torres Strait Islander cultures (Herle & Rouse, 1998: 1, 3).

The aims of the second expedition were recorded and its results briefly summarised (Haddon, 1898, 1899). Haddon (1901) also provided a popular account of this and his earlier expedition. A monograph series on the Islanders and their cultures was published in 6 volumes

(Haddon, 1901-35). Haddon was editor of, and a significant contributor to these volumes. He had earlier published an ethnography of the 'Western Tribes' and a paper on ceremonial life following his first visit (Haddon, 1890; 1893), as well as other papers (some jointly) not concerned with material culture.

The artefacts collected during both expeditions, totalling around 1,900 items (Moore, 1984: 38), are for convenience referred to as the Haddon Collection, even though some were collected by other members of the multidisciplinary expedition or others, mainly local non-Islander residents. Much of the collection's importance lies in the immense amount of contextual information that accompanies most items. The collection and publications provide a wealth of information that later scholars have relied on when studying or writing about Torres Strait Islander material culture (Herle, 1998). David Moore (1984) published a well-illustrated catalogue of this significant collection.

Today, the Haddon Collection is spread among a number of institutions in Great Britain, Australia and the USA. The bulk of the collection is housed in two English museums; the British Museum holds most of the 1888-9 collection while the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology holds most of the 1898 collection. Small numbers of 'duplicate' objects were sent to other museums, including the Queensland Museum.

The University of Cambridge marked the centenary of the 1898 expedition with an exhibition based on the collections and records assembled by Haddon and his colleagues. Including recent

Torres Strait material culture, *Torres Strait Islanders: an exhibition to mark the centenary of the 1898 anthropological expedition*, reviewed the expedition and its results 'while presenting the strengths and richness of Torres Strait Islander culture, past and present' (Herle, 2000: 254). *Torres Strait Islanders* ran for over 2 years, closing in December 2000. A booklet was produced to accompany the exhibition and through the material exhibited provided an overview of Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures (Herle & Philp, 1998; Edwards, 1999). Cambridge also put out a collection of writings to mark the centenary (Herle & Rouse, 1998). Particularly relevant here is Anita Herle's (1998) analysis of artefact biographies and Haddon's collecting activities (Herle & Philp, 2000).

The Haddon Collection has played a significant role in an Australian museum exhibition. The National Museum of Australia opened on 11 March 2001 in Canberra and, for the first time in a major Australian museum, a permanent gallery devoted to the cultures of Torres Strait Islanders comprises part of the *First Australians* Gallery. Included in the opening exhibition were 70 objects from the Haddon Collection lent by the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. A central exhibit is a 6m long dugout canoe with outriggers made especially for the opening exhibition by members of the Saibai Island community in 2000. A catalogue was produced to accompany the display (Philp, 2001).

SURVEY: TORRES STRAIT COLLECTIONS

The earliest and most comprehensive collections of Islander artefacts are located in museums outside Australia. Many of these overseas collections, along with collections from Australian national and state museums, have been included in this survey. Guides to holdings by overseas museums are found in Cooper (1989) and Fraser (1963). While Cooper (1989) covers all material culture, Fraser (1963: Appendix B) is concerned with 'sculpture', particularly turtle-shell masks.

Apart from the Haddon Collection, all other collections generally represent a low number of acquisitions. Their level of documentation varies from very detailed in only a few instances to basic in most cases. Good documentation includes the collector, the collection location (island) and, in more recent collections, the name of makers. Some items have no documentation at all but are clearly Torres Strait in form and style. The Haddon Collection is the only one that

approaches being representative of the range of Islander material culture. It contains many items used in everyday life in addition to ceremonial objects and sculptured works that make up the bulk of most collections, or in some cases, the entire collection. In 1979, Pamela Brodie from James Cook University's Material Culture Unit made the only other collection of comparable range, though on a far smaller scale. The other Torres Strait collections comprise, on the whole, a selective array of objects probably reflecting the interests of individual collectors and the artefacts made available to them. However, some museums are again focussing some of their endeavours in the Torres Strait and this is resulting in the acquisition of a range of material with excellent documentation. It is against this background that the strengths and weaknesses of the collections as a whole are considered.

Even though some collections do include a broad range of objects, some artefact types are not represented at all or are poorly represented. Most noticeable in the collections surveyed is the absence of watercraft. This is particularly significant when considering people whose lifestyles revolve around the sea and the centrality of canoes to the 'traditional' Islander maritime lifeway (Barham, 2000). While some collections include models of canoes and several possess canoe-gear, such as paddles and canoe ornaments, only the National Museum of Australia's collection contains a Torres Strait Islander canoe (Fig. 1). This lack of canoes most likely simply reflects the fact that Torres Strait Islander canoes were very large, some over 20m long, and so would have been very costly and difficult to transport out of the Torres Strait. Probably a more important factor was the value to their owners.

Toys and games are also noticeably lacking, and apart from spinning tops and leaf balls, few examples of toys and games, particularly children's, were collected. Such items do not present a high profile and are unlikely to be collected by anyone unless they had spent an extended time in the area. Only in the Haddon and Brodie Collections do they appear. While there is a higher proportion of men's objects than women's and children's, the ratio of men's to women's objects is much more balanced than in most collections of Aboriginal artefacts where men's objects generally predominate (Aboriginal Studies Department, 1992; Russell, 2001: 42-43).

Just over 60% of the artefacts surveyed come



FIG. 1. The canoe *Kulba Saibai*, made by members of the Saibai community in 2000 for the National Museum of Australia. (George Serras, National Museum of Australia).

from the Eastern Islands. When we take into account that unprovenanced Torres Strait artefacts make up almost half of the remainder, it becomes apparent that the other 3 sub-regions are not well represented in museum collections — the Western Islands comprise 14% and the Central and Top Western groups share equally the remainder. Why does this discrepancy occur?

While it is generally accepted that Torres Strait Islanders can be divided into 4 related cultural groups (Horton, 1994, II: 1091), Haddon (1890: 301) divided them into 2 'tribes' — Eastern and Western. Around 1/3 of artefacts surveyed are from the Haddon Collection. The majority of the Cambridge Expedition's time was spent on islands in the Eastern (mainly Mer) and Western Groups (especially Mabuiag), particularly the former (Haddon, 1935: xi; Sillitoe, 1976: table 1). Little time was spent in the Central and Top Western Island Groups. Haddon's substantial collection from the Eastern Islands understandably dominates the total holdings of Torres Strait material in museums.

Other contributing factors to the high percentage of Eastern Islands material in collections include the setting up of the first missions and schools in

the region and the simple fact that early movement through Torres Strait by ship necessitated travelling close to the Eastern Islands (McNiven, 2001; Nicholson, 1996). This situation had changed by 1877 when the administrative centre for the Torres Strait moved from Somerset (Cape York) to Thursday Island in the Western Islands. By this time the effects of pearling, missionary and other activities were being felt throughout the whole of the Torres Strait (Beckett, 1987; Mullins, 1995; Sharp, 1993). This involved, among other things, the movement of large numbers of Islanders and non-Islanders throughout the region. As a result large numbers of artefacts also moved between various centres, though rarely were appropriate records of these movements kept. Some early artefacts and collections were not therefore as accurately provenanced as they might have been. This should be borne in mind when studying such material.

Although the collections cover a wide time scale, commencing in at least 1848-50 with the collection made by the personnel aboard HMS *Rattlesnake*, it is disturbing that only a very few collections have been made since 1940. Apart from the Brodie, Wilson and Kaus/Richardson

Collections, the bulk of this material consists of specimens of shells predominantly used as raw materials or in the manufacture of artefacts. There does, however, appear to be renewed interest in Islander material culture by museums. The National Museum of Australia has targeted Torres Strait as one of its priority areas. This program began in 1992 when 2 staff members went to Torres Strait and assembled an important collection of contemporary material. In connection with this on-going project the National Museum commissioned a report on holdings of Islander artefacts as well as relevant archival and library material housed in Australian institutions (Reynolds & Stacey, 1992).

Since the late 1980s, museums have tended to pay more attention to the fact that many Torres Strait Islanders now live on the mainland. The former Tropical Museum of Anthropology (James Cook University, Townsville), the Queensland Museum (Brisbane) and the National Museum of Australia (Canberra) have all recently acquired collections made by Islanders living on mainland Australia for instance.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

This discussion concentrates on Australian collections, as well as some of the more important overseas collections. Four categories are used in describing the documentation:

- 1) Poor – refers to objects with little or no information;
- 2) Basic – implies limited data, usually collector's name, collection location and date;
- 3) Good – includes the preceding with some additional data provided by the collector, perhaps the local name or the uses of the artefact(s);
- 4) Detailed – includes extensive information in addition to the former. One would expect the names of makers to be a basic part of the documentation but this is rarely the case in older collections; it is generally only in recent times that this kind of information has consistently been recorded.

Some museums hold important collections of Torres Strait material made by particular individuals. Where this is the case, information is summarised at the end of the entry. Island groups are listed in descending order of number of objects. The level of documentation could be improved with research in many cases. There is source material, written and visual, including photographs and unpublished diaries, available for some collections. Most if not all museums hold objects without place documentation. It is

possible some of the collections considered here hold unprovenanced Torres Strait Islander objects. Therefore, the number of objects provided in the survey should not be taken to be absolute and anyone seeking to inspect a particular collection should contact the institution concerned to seek further details.

AUSTRALIA. All national and state museums and art galleries in Australia hold Torres Strait Islander material culture. My survey revealed Australian museums hold 2,047 Torres Strait Islander objects while art galleries and the Kura Meta Cultural Centre (Thursday Island) and Goemulgau Kod cultural organisation (Mabuiag Island) hold a further 500. Most gallery holdings are artworks dating to within the last 20 years.

The figure of 2,047 represents an increase of 230 on Reynolds & Stacey's (1992: 77) survey. This discrepancy probably reflects new acquisitions and improved documentation of collections. For example, Reynolds & Stacey documented 80 objects at the Macleay Museum (University of Sydney) while my survey identified 100 objects. While it cannot be established whether or not some of these objects were collected in Torres Strait or southern PNG, the results of careful research and a good understanding of the collection's history by a number of curators has led to this new outcome.

The richest collections, in terms of diversity, are to be found in museums in the eastern states. The Queensland Museum holds the largest collection, while the oldest dated collection is in the Macleay Museum. The latter include arm-bands and pendants collected by A.A.W. Onslow, a naval officer on the HMS *Herald*, which undertook a surveying expedition between 1852 and 1861 that included Torres Strait. Taken together, the eastern states museums hold objects collected from the 1850s up to recent years, although 1940-78 is poorly represented. Museums in Perth and Darwin hold only 6 items between them. Overall, there is a broad range of objects and about half of the total was made in the Eastern Islands.

Kura Meta Cultural Centre (Thursday Island). Approximately 300 items are located at the High School on Thursday Island. From all island groups, the collection includes recent items such as carvings, headdresses dancing gear and fishing equipment. A significant collection comprises equipment used in pearling, including a full diving outfit and historical tools.

Gateway Resort Museum (Horn Island). This privately operated museum focuses on the participation of Islanders in war. It also holds an extensive collection of paintings by local artists, many illustrating local legends and stories.

Goemulgau Kod (Mabuiag Island). The Goemulgau Kod is not a museum but a community learning centre that will also have a Keeping Place for important cultural items and documents (McNiven, Fitzpatrick & Cordell, this volume). It holds a number of locally found stone/clamshell axe/adzes and stone club heads.

James Cook University (Townsville). The collection contains 337 items, most of which were made in the 1970s or later. About 30% of items were made by Islanders living on the mainland. The documentation is generally detailed and the regions represented are Eastern, mainland and Western. The Pamela Brodie Collection of 161 items was made largely in the Eastern Islands in 1979. It includes a wide range of objects such as raw materials and a few partly made objects. David Lawrence and Lindsay Wilson have also donated objects to the museum. The JCU collection is in the process of being transferred to the Museum of Tropical Queensland (Townsville), a campus of the Queensland Museum.

Queensland Museum (Brisbane). This is an amalgamation of small collections and single object acquisitions that totals some 512 objects. It contains a wide range of artefacts dating from the late 19th Century to 2000. Strengths include ceremonial items and recently made objects from the mainland. Other items (not included in figures above) are mummified ancestral remains, hair samples and secret/sacred items that continue to be de-accessioned for repatriation. The collection also contains a few artefacts presented by Haddon and a small amount of archaeological material collected by Ron Vanderwal in 1972. Documentation on the whole is basic but some is detailed, particularly for recently collected material. The A.O.C. Davies Collection of 131 objects dates from the mid-1920s and was obtained almost exclusively from Mer (Eastern Islands) where Davies was a school teacher. This collection includes a wide range of objects and 92 photographs. Rev W.H. MacFarlane donated a small number of objects. The Lindsay Wilson Collection of 29 objects represents Islanders in many parts of mainland Australia and was collected in 1990. Most recently, an extensive collection of photographs and objects obtained by the Rev. J.J.E. Done (early 20th Century) and his daughter Barbara Stevenson was lodged with

the museum. The museum has the following regions represented: Eastern, Western, mainland, Central and Top Western.

Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland (Brisbane). The collection features some 150 objects of which nearly half are samples of shells with basic documentation obtained by Margaret Lawrie. An excellent collection of stone-headed clubs comes from the Eastern Islands. The regions represented are Eastern and Top Western.

Queensland Art Gallery (Brisbane). The collection is made up of 29 works including jewellery, headdresses, masks, prints and textiles dating between 1989 and 2001. The artist is known for 80% of works. Regions covered are Western (Thursday Island), unprovenanced, mainland, Eastern and Western.

Australian Museum (Sydney). Some 420 items, made up by several small collections and single object acquisitions. It represents a wide range of artefacts with basic documentation dating from 1890-1980. Two strengths of the collection are weapons from the Eastern Islands and ceremonial objects. Notable are 167 objects collected from Mer by Charles Hedley and Alan McCulloch during a biological expedition in 1907 and another of 45 objects made by P.G. Black on Mer in 1908. The regions represented are Eastern, Top Western, Western and Central. The Australian Museum has completed a soon-to-be published catalogue of its Torres Strait holdings.

Macleay Museum (Sydney). 117 objects mostly attributed to Torres Strait. The bulk of the collection is clothing, ornaments and arrows collected in 1875 or earlier. Most items were collected on, or attributed to, the *Chevert Expedition* of 1875, while some items were probably collected by A.A. Onslow of HMS *Herald* about 1860. Human remains (not included in the above figure) held by the Macleay Museum are currently the subject of negotiations for repatriation. Regions represented are unprovenanced, Eastern and Western.

Australian National Maritime Museum (Sydney). The collection contains 64 items, the majority of which were made in the 1990s. Several items were commissioned for exhibitions. Included are 4 dance costumes (2 men's and 2 children's). The regions represented are Central, Top Western, Eastern and Western. The level of documentation ranges from detailed to basic.

Art Gallery of New South Wales (Sydney). Eight items comprising 6 artworks from the 1990s and

two masks. Regions covered are mainland, unprovenanced and Eastern.

National Gallery of Australia (Canberra). The collection of 121 items mostly comprises artworks from the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., prints, photographs, installations and textiles). The level of documentation is detailed with artists known for most works. The regions represented are Eastern, Western, mainland, unprovenanced and Top Western.

National Museum of Australia (Canberra). The collection of 300 items is made up mostly by small collections. Almost all artefacts were collected after 1960 with 2/3 obtained after 1990. Included are 2 dance costumes (1 man's and 1 child's). There is a wide range of objects and documentation is good to detailed. Features include Wolfgang Laade's collection of basketry and shells collected in 1963-65. The balance of Laade's collection is in the Museum für Völkerkunde (Berlin). In 1992, David Kaus and Lori Richardson collected a range of objects at the 6th Cultural Festival, Thursday Island and on Mer. Included are 44 drawings by Primary School children and other artworks by High School students. Also featured is a collection of 32 items used in the Drums of Mer Dance Group's performance at the opening of the National Museum's 1993 exhibition *Landmarks - People, Land and Political Change*. The regions covered are Eastern, Central, Top Western, mainland and Western.

Melbourne Museum (Melbourne). This recently re-housed museum (formerly Museum of Victoria) contain 13 unprovenanced objects. A feature is a large turtle-shell mask dating to before 1885 (McNiven, David et al., this volume).

National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne). The collection of 29 works includes paintings, photographs, fabrics and headdresses by named artists. Regions represented are Eastern, unprovenanced, Central and Western.

South Australian Museum (Adelaide). A small collection of 31 objects that includes 13 items received from the daughter of Edith Wyly who lived on Thursday Island for a year in the 1920s with her uncle, the missionary Rev W.H. MacFarlane. The level of documentation is poor to basic. Regions covered are Central, mainland, Western and Eastern.

Art Gallery of South Australia (Adelaide). Two linocuts on paper by Dennis Nona and Anne Gela and 1 headdress by Ken Thaiday, all early 1990s.

Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery (Hobart). This single collection of 45 artefacts was made by Lionel Butler, past Superintendent and Government

teacher, in 1934-35. Items are from the Eastern (especially Mer) and Western regions. The level of documentation is good.

Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery (Launceston). This regional museum contains 3 small collections totalling 51 unprovenanced artefacts. It includes objects donated by Rev W.H. MacFarlane. There is a range of objects but the level of documentation is poor.

Berndt Museum of Anthropology (Perth). The collection is represented only by 2 headdresses collected in 1979 from the Western Islands and the mainland. The level of documentation is good.

Western Australian Museum (Perth). This collection contains a single rattle made on the mainland, probably between 1939 and 1942.

Art Gallery of Western Australia (Perth). A collection of 4 prints by Destiny Deacon (dated 1999).

Northern Territory Museum of Arts & Sciences (Darwin). 2 items of clothing and a pillow case collected in 1960 with little documentation and a lithograph by Sania May Mabo (dated 1997).

OVERSEAS. This part of the survey focuses on collections held in Great Britain and the United States.

Museum of Mankind (British Museum) (London). More than 1,000 objects, including historically significant collections by missionaries and famous 19th Century expeditions. Documentation ranges from poor to detailed. Feature collections include 23 items obtained by personnel of HMS *Rattlesnake* (1848-50), a collection acquired from the London Mission Society and some 650 items collected by Alfred Haddon in 1888-89. The regions represented are Eastern, Western, Central and Top Western.

Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology (Cambridge). This museum contains the most famous collection of Torres Strait material culture in the world. Alfred Haddon collected most of the approximately 1,250 objects in 1898 (some 'duplicate' objects also come from the 1888-89 expedition). There are also about 30 items from the 1990s. The collection features a wide range of artefacts including raw materials and partly made objects. The level of documentation is detailed. Most items are from the Eastern Islands, followed by the Western, Top Western and Central groups.

Horniman Museum (London). A small collection of 'duplicate' items presented by Haddon. There is a range of artefacts with detailed documentation.

The regions represented are Eastern, Western and Central.

Pitt Rivers Museum (Oxford). A few small collections, including those made by Pitt Rivers and Haddon. The level of documentation ranges from basic to detailed. The regions represented are Eastern and Western.

Royal Scottish Museum (Edinburgh). Another small collection of 24 objects with basic documentation. The regions represented are Western and Top Western.

Kelvin Grove Museum & Art Gallery (Glasgow). A single collection of 135 items from 1889 made by Robert Bruce, a trader based on Mer. Documentation is basic. Regions represented are Eastern, Top Western and Western.

National Museum Of Ireland (Dublin). Another small collection of 'duplicate' items presented by Haddon. A range of artefacts is represented and the level of documentation is detailed. The regions covered are Eastern, Central, Western and Top Western.

Museum Für Völkerkunde (Berlin). A collection of approximately 180 items. Linde collected the earliest items, including turtle shell masks, in 1860. Other significant collectors are Rev James Chalmers (about 1880) and Wolfgang Laade in 1963-65. No regional data was available for this paper.

American Museum of Natural History (New York). The collection comprises 4 acquisitions totalling 46 objects, including a small amount of 'duplicate' material presented by Haddon. The regions represented are Eastern and Top Western. The documentation varies from basic to detailed.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York). 6 objects, including 3 masks and a stone figure. The regions represented are Eastern and Western.

Smithsonian Institution (Washington). Another small collection of 'duplicate' objects with detailed documentation presented by Haddon. The regions represented are Eastern, Western, Top Western and Central.

RESEARCH ON TORRES STRAIT MATERIAL CULTURE

Just as the museum collections display inadequacies, so too does the range of research that has been carried out into Torres Strait Islander material culture. There are numerous popular articles in journals like *Walkabout*, as well as a small number of general books, all of which show Islander material culture within its broader

cultural context. Some non-Islander residents have written accounts of their time on the Islands and sometimes include useful information on material culture (e.g., Singe, 1979). A few workers have attempted regional studies of particular artefact types and included reference to examples from Torres Strait. Then there are the people who wrote on single or narrow aspects of material culture. The remaining group comprise a few people like Haddon who have attempted more detailed or holistic approaches to Islander material culture. It is not possible to consider them all and just the main published contributions to Islander material culture studies will be discussed here.

The earliest records were made by a small number of people from exploration/survey ships. These records range from short anecdotes to more extended accounts. Some writers had an interest in other cultures and this can be seen from their journals. The first significant records seem to have followed the voyage of the *Isabella*, undertaken in 1836 to search for survivors of the *Charles Eaton* (Brockett, 1836; King, 1837). The 1840s saw the commencement of increased contact, beginning with 2 surveying expeditions. The first, in 1844-45, was undertaken on HMS *Fly* and HMS *Bramble*. The work was continued in 1848-50 with the *Bramble* and HMS *Rattlesnake*. The official records are important sources of information about material culture (Jukes, 1847; MacGillivray, 1852). The journals of Thomas Huxley (1935), assistant surgeon and naturalist on the *Rattlesnake*, and John Sweatman (1977), clerk on the *Bramble*, are further sources of information.

The journals of the HMS *Rattlesnake*'s artist, O.W. Brierly (Moore, 1979) contain his observations and detailed ethnographic statements obtained from Barbara Thompson, the sole survivor of the shipwrecked cutter *America*, stranded on a reef near Horn Island in 1846. Thompson had been rescued by Kaurareg people of the Murulag (Prince of Wales) Group of islands and lived with them for several years. Despite the depth of his research, Haddon did not sight Brierly's journals that both complement and supplement his accounts of the Western Islands (Haddon, 1890; 1901-35). The works of Haddon and Brierly (Moore, 1972, 1979) contain much information on the material culture of the Western Islands.

The following 3-4 decades saw an increase in the number of ships using the Torres Strait as a

passage between eastern Australia and Asia (Nicholson, 1996). The level of outside activity further increased during this time with visits by traders and others searching for pearlshell, bêche-de-mer, turtle shell and sandalwood as well as by government officials and missionaries (Haddon, 1935: 3-18; Mullins, 1995; Sharp, 1993). However, very little on Torres Strait Islander material culture was published during this period (1860-90).

The late 19th Century saw an increased interest in the material culture of indigenous peoples with the rise of evolutionist and diffusionist theoretical approaches in anthropology (Barnard, 2000; Harris, 1969). These approaches, with their emphasis on material culture as measures of the so-called developmental phases of cultures (social evolutionism) and the geographical spread and development of cultures (diffusionism), were popular until around the 1920s/30s when anthropology headed off in new directions. While never completely abandoned, it was not until later in the 20th Century that interest in material culture studies was renewed to any extent. Interest in Torres Strait Islander material culture broadly followed these intellectual trends.

GENERAL SURVEYS. Until the late 1980s, Haddon was the only person who attempted a detailed synthesis of Islander material culture. Later writers have based much of their historical work on Haddon's publications. It is in the *Reports* of the Cambridge Expedition, published over a 34 year period (1901-35), that the earliest concerted attempt to discuss the material culture of Torres Strait Islanders has been made, particularly in Volumes IV to VI. Volume IV deals with objects employed in everyday life with descriptions of the artefacts, and includes details on manufacture, use and distribution of a wide range of artefact types. Volumes V and VI include details on the artefacts used in initiation, sorcery, fishing and agricultural magic, trade and funerary and other religious ceremonies. Although the emphasis in these two volumes is not on the material objects used in these events, they nevertheless contain descriptions of many artefact types as well as much information on their uses. All three volumes are heavily illustrated with line drawings and photographs, almost exclusively of artefacts collected by Haddon and his colleagues in 1888-89 and 1898. Volume IV, for instance, contains over 400 drawings and more than 200 artefacts are figured

in the black and white photographic plates. The illustrations in these volumes depict objects from all regions, but the majority are from the Eastern Islands. Volume I, the introductory volume (and published last), includes further information obtained after the expeditions, and corrections where required (Haddon, 1935: 293-316, 351-374). In 1984, David Moore published an illustrated catalogue of the Haddon Collection. This catalogue is arranged into artefact functional types for each of the 4 regions. Together, these volumes provide a comprehensive account of this very important collection.

Edge-Partington & Heape (1890-98) privately published an album of line-drawings, in 2 parts, of artefacts from the Pacific region held in museums in England and Oceania. Both volumes, particularly the first, include objects from the Torres Strait. Haddon and his colleagues collected the majority of Islander objects illustrated. However, some unpublished artefacts from early collections such as the HMS *Rattlesnake* Collection, are also included.

A delightful little book written by children in Cairns looks at the manufacture and use of a wide range of artefacts, including clothing, canoes, fishing implements, weapons and musical instruments (Fitzgerald, n.d. [1988]). It is part of a series produced by the Cairns Education Office for their English as a Second Language Program.

David Moore (1989) also published a general readership book on Islander material culture as part of the 'Shire Ethnography' series. Moore again relied heavily on the Haddon Collection but brought the situation up to the present, partly through his own experience. The other recent general contributor to Islander material culture studies is Lindsay Wilson (1988, 1993). Both books look at a wide range of objects through the use of excellent line drawings (many are pencil sketches) and photographs. These illustrations complement a very readable text that places each object in its cultural context. Wilson's books cover a greater range of old and contemporary Torres Strait Islander objects than any other publication.

David Lawrence (1994, 1998) provided the most detailed synthesis of Torres Strait material culture. His focus is on trade/exchange items and a broad range of historical and contemporary items are discussed. Vanderwal (this volume) provides the most recent overview and synthesis of historical trade relationships across the western part of Torres Strait.

SPECIALISED STUDIES. A small number of workers, including Haddon, have written on particular classes of Islander material culture, such as canoes and sculpture. Interested observers, including missionaries and non-Islander residents, have made additional contributions. The latter have mostly appeared in popular journals but, treated with appropriate care, are of use to the student of Islander material culture. They are particularly useful because the majority consist of observations made since the time of Haddon's last visit and so provide insights into various aspects of Islander material culture at later points of time. This is important when we remember that Islander life has undergone radical change since the 1870s (Beckett, 1987; Mullins, 1995; Sharp, 1993).

In 1893, Haddon described secular and secret ceremonies he viewed in 1888-89. He saw these in all 4 regions although in some cases, at Haddon's request, they were performed for the first time in some years. In particular, Haddon described in depth the material culture of the dances, apparel worn by the dancers, props and musical instruments. The only other workers to write on dance are Beckett (1972; 1981) and Mabo & Beckett (2000). In notes accompanying published recordings, Beckett briefly described instruments used in Islander music. These notes are particularly useful in that they consider innovative and traditional instruments used from 1958 onwards. Frank York (2000) provided contemporary perspectives on Torres Strait Islander music.

Fraser (1963) made a major library and museum study of 'sculpture', particularly masks. Working with the fairly small sample of available items, he divided sculpture into 2 styles on the basis of island of origin and function. To each style he assigned *type specimens* supposedly representative of each style (Fraser, 1963: 43) but with few details of defining features. Nevertheless, he distinguished 12 islands of significance that produced sculpture and suggested that there may have been 7 others for which no examples now exist. Despite its shortcomings, Fraser's work provides the basis for attributing islands of manufacture for masks that lack vital provenance information. Fraser (1959) also described in detail a turtle-shell figure from Erub (Darnley Island) that was only briefly described in his subsequent book (1963: 93-94). Crownover (1961) and Pretty (1963) described single masks, provenanced simply to the Torres Strait. Fraser's other contribution was his attempt to reconstruct the description of a headhouse, and in doing so

consider the functions of such buildings (Fraser, 1960). The last headhouse was demolished in the 1870s at the demand of missionaries.

A few museums have in their collections mummified human remains from the Eastern Islands, even though this burial practice appears to have been more widespread in Torres Strait (Haddon, 1935: 321-322). Written accounts about mummies generally include descriptions of apparel on the body and the frame on which the body is mounted (Dawson, 1924, 1927; Flower, 1879; Hamlyn-Harris, 1912; Pretty 1969). Collected as examples of how Torres Strait Islanders dealt with their dead, those held in Australian museums are currently the subject of negotiations for repatriation to their respective communities.

Other specialist studies include canoes (Haddon, 1913; 1918; 1937), string figures (Jayne, 1906; Kathleen Haddon, 1911; 1930 — Alfred's daughter; Rivers & Haddon, 1902) and spinning tops from Mer (Read, 1888). Mario Mabo (1985) published a short paper on how to make and use a stone top, written in both Meriam Mir and English. McNiven (1998) on stone-headed clubs (*gabagaba*) is an important contribution, correcting anomalies about their sources and considers their ceremonial role in trade/exchange and social alliance formation.

On a thematic level, Johannes & MacFarlane (1991) examine contemporary marine subsistence across the Strait and historically situate these activities, particularly in terms of Haddon's recordings. While not a primary focus, a wealth of information is documented on the material culture used in fishing and the extensive knowledge Islander people have about the resources of the sea.

Although it did not focus on contemporary Torres Strait Islander art, the catalogue for the exhibition *Ilan Pasin* (Mosby & Robinson, 1998) warrants a mention. The volume is a collection of writings about various aspects of Islander culture, including artefact collections. Significantly, a number of the papers are by Torres Strait Islanders, writing about issues as diverse as identity and contemporary arts. In particular, Mary Bani's (1998; see also Bani, 2000) paper considered the significance of material culture collections to Torres Strait Islander people today. Elder Ephraim Bani addressed similar issues in the film *Cracks in the Mask* (Calvert, 1997), as has Jude Philp (1998).

CONCLUSION

Apart from the work of Haddon, little research has been carried out on Torres Strait Islander material culture until recent years. This dearth is reflected in both the literature and museum collections. While the Eastern Islands are fairly well represented in museum collections, the same cannot be said of other regions. These biases can only be rectified with appropriate research projects and collecting programs. Museums should also attempt to acquire any older collections held by non-Islanders, especially those pre-dating 1900 and those dating between 1940 and 1980, should they become available. In both instances the Central and Top Western regions require urgent consideration. An overview of the material culture as a whole needs to be carried out, with attention paid to changes following Haddon's recordings. Detailed examination and synthesis of existing museum collections, despite their weaknesses, would be an invaluable start to such a study.

With the current trend of Australia's state museums to focus on the regions or states they represent, it is quite possible that only two museums on the mainland will play an active role in collecting, researching and displaying Torres Strait Islander material culture in the foreseeable future. These are the Queensland Museum and the National Museum of Australia. Active field collecting, in conjunction with Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, could provide some Islanders with money in a depressed working environment and may also assist to further stimulate a flourishing arts and crafts industry in Torres Strait. Ultimately, the appropriate place to show many of these items would be a museum or cultural centre on Thursday Island (such as the proposed Gab Titui Culture Centre), linked to various island-based culture centres and 'keeping places' (McNiven, Fitzpatrick & Cordell, this volume).

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