

**Objects of Possession: Artefact Transactions in the Wet Tropics of North
Queensland, 1870 -2013**

Anthelme Thozet collections and Archives in French Museums

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Anthelme Thozet was a French-Australian botanist and ethnographer who lived most of his life at Rockhampton in Australia. Between the early 1860s' and 1878, he provided some fine examples of natural specimens (animals, plants, wood), Queensland indigenous artefacts, human remains, photographs and documentations notes to French and Australian museums. Today Thozets' 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 personals archives provide a valuable insight into the history of collecting Aboriginal artefacts in the entire state of Queensland, from Cape York to Brisbane. Thozets' history and material is mostly unknown and has never been studied before. This research was made in collaboration with Claire Brizon from the Musée des Confluences, she should be jointly acknowledges for the following findings.

1 – BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Anthelme Thozet (1826 - 1878)

Thozet was born at Cheignieu, near the city of Lyon in 1826. Little information is known about his youth in France but he was reported to be a member or a militant of the extreme left of the French Assembly in 1848. Following the coup d'Etat de Louis Napoleon Bonaparte in 1851 and the establishment of the Second Empire, Thozet was forced to leave France for England. Three years later he immigrated to Australia where he worked at the Sydney Botanic Gardens (1856-58); before moving to the Canoona goldfield, north of Rockhampton (Queensland). In 1860 Thozet established an experimental garden in north Rockhampton and began exchanging with naturalist Ferdinand von Mueller, Curator of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. During this decade Thozet studied the indigenous use of native plants in north Queensland and published the booklet 'Roots, Tubers, Bulbs and fruits used as Vegetable Foods by Aborigines of Northern Queensland'. He sent plants and wood specimens to the London and Paris International Exhibitions in 1862 and 1867.

In early 1870, Thozet campaigned successfully for the creation of a botanical garden in Rockhampton. Around the same time he briefly travelled back to France and Switzerland and probably deepened his connexions with natural history museum in Lyon and Paris. In 1874 he made an important donation of Australian plants, animals and artefacts to the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle in Lyon. The 11 aboriginal weapons included in the donation were the first cultural artefacts acquired by the French Institution formerly devoted to only natural specimens. He then continued an important written correspondence with the prestigious Museum d'Histoire Naturelle of Paris with a possible 60 letters. These documents, mostly unexploited, could contain important information on the conditions of collecting practices in Queensland at the end of the 19th century. His interest and relationship with Australian indigenous people as sources for his research seem quite interesting and innovative for his time. Thozet kept sending material, including human remains and photographs to the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle of Paris up until his death in 1878. During his lifetime he also published an important amount of scientific articles in the Bulletin de la Société d'Acclimatation de Paris between 1872 and 1880. These publications haven't yet been accessed.

2- MUSÉE DES CONFLUENCES COLLECTION (MDC)

Former collection of the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle de Lyon 1874

List of ethnographic objects donated by Thozet: 11 objects donated by Thozet were registered in the museum's entries book in 1874, 9 remain in the current collection.

STONE AXE

Ref. number: 2006.0.85

Dimension: 7.7cm x 11.5 cm; *width:* 2.1 cm *weight:* 0.246 kgs

Material: Basalt rock

Location: Rockhampton area, Central Queensland (north-west)

Note: The axe is attributed to the « tribe Yarra Koren (ou Koreu) », from the north side of the Fitzroy River (probably a clan of the Darumbal nation.)

STONE AXE

Ref. number: 2006.0.86

Dimension: 5.3cm x 7.2 cm; *width:* 1.7 cm, *weight:* 0.086 gm

Material: variolitic rocks

Location: Mount Archer, Rockhampton, Central Queensland (north-west)

Note: The axe stone was found by Thozet at Mount Archer, to the North-East of Rockhampton.

SHIELD (North West region)

Ref. number: 60000751

Dimension: 44.5 cm x 25 cm; *width:* 5 cm, *weight:* 0.596 kg

Material: Erythrina vespertilio

Location: Central Queensland

Note: In the Musée entries book, this type of shield is described as « Colmarets », probably the aboriginal name, close to another central Queensland word « Gulmari » meaning « shield ».

POLYCHROME SHIELD (North West region)

Ref. number: 60003411

Dimension: 52 cm x 22.5 cm; *width:* 5.5 cm, *weight:* 0.774 kg

Material: Erythrina vespertilio

Location: Central Queensland

Note: In the Musée entries book, this type of shield is described as « Colmarets », probably the aboriginal name, close to another central Queensland word « Gulmari » meaning « shield ».

POLYCHROME SHIELD (North West region)

Ref. number: 60003412

Dimension: 47 cm x 23 cm; *width:* 7cm; *weight:* 0.760 kg

Material: Erythrina vespertilio

Location: Central Queensland

Note: In the Musée entries book, this type of shield is described as « Colmarets », probably the aboriginal name, close to another central Queensland word « Gulmari » meaning « shield ».

PINEAPPLE CLUB (*Nulla Nulla*)

Ref. number: 60000756

Dimension: 71 cm x 7 cm; *width: 7cm, diameter: 7 cm*

Material: *Accacia harpophylla*

Location: Queensland,

Note: In the Musée entries book, this type of shield is described as « Nulla Nulla ». The Musée entries book (according to Thozet) describes the way the incisions are made on the clubs and boomerangs with kangaroo teeth.

PINEAPPLE CLUB (*Nulla Nulla*)

Ref. number: 60003432

Dimension: NA. (Museum's dimensions incorrect -to be corrected)

Material: *Accacia harpophylla*, red ochre, white clay

Location: Queensland,

Note: In the Musée entries book, this type of shield is described as « Nulla Nulla ». The Musée entries book (noted by Thozet) describes the way the incisions are made on the clubs and boomerangs with kangaroo teeth.

BOOMERANG (*Vouangals*)

Ref. number: 60003593 (to be confirmed as 1 of the Thozet donation)

Dimension: NA.

Material: *Accacia harpophylla*

Location: New South Wales

Note: In the Musée entries book, this type of shield is described as « Nulla Nulla ». The Musée entries book (noted by Thozet) describes the way the incisions are made on the clubs and boomerangs with kangaroo teeth.

The musée du quai Branly owns a very similar boomerang also donated by Thozet.

BOOMERANG (*Vouangals*)

Ref. number: 60000756 (to be confirmed as 1 of the Thozet donations)

Dimension: NA.

Material: *Accacia harpophylla*

Location: New South Wales

Note: In the Musée entries book, this type of shield is described as « Nulla Nulla ». The Musée entries book (noted by Thozet) describes the way the incisions are made on the clubs and boomerangs with kangaroo teeth.

OTHER TYPES OF COLLECTED MATERIAL (MDC):

- 1 Human skull (Rockhampton)
- Australian fauna: birds (9), bats (2), reptiles (2 – non identified), goanna (1), insects (quantity unknown); amphibians (22 -12 species), saurians (34 -15 species).

3 - MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY AND MUSEUM NATIONAL HISTOIRE NATURELLE COLLECTIONS

Preliminary research only

The Musée du quai Branly owned 8 ethnographic objects, photographs, an unknown quantity of human remains and several letters sent by Thozet to the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris around 1876.

List of ethnographic objects donated by Thozet:

- Stone axe (71.1903.12.7)
- Grinder (71.1887.20.1)
- Boomerang (71.1903.12.1)
- Boomerang (71.1883.29.18)
- Boomerang (71.1883.29.19)
- Boomerang (71.1883.29.20)
- Boomerang (71.1883.29.21)
- Boomerang (71.1883.29.23)

Human remains:

Human remains from north Queensland (Rockhampton, Cape York and other locations) were sent by Thozet to museums in Paris.

Photos:

A preliminary research has shown at least 16 photos donated by Thozet to the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle. The photos show human skulls and Indigenous people from the Rockhampton area (studio photos of indigenous men, women and children).

Letters:

Several written by Thozet and addressed to the President of the Museum describe the material sent and the context of the collect. I have been able to access 4 letters so far, although there are more. Thozet's son August continued to correspond with the museum after his father's death in 1878. The letters seemed very valuable with precise information on the collect in Queensland at the end of the 19th century, including links between central and north Queensland. I haven't received permission to reproduce the letters in this report. The authorisation could be obtained from the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris.

I have read about 4 letters owned by the MHN of Paris, which include valuable data about collecting in Queensland at the time, including information about the relationships between north Queensland and the Rockhampton area, indigenous local life, indigenous interpretation of designs on boomerangs, the exchanges between Thozet and other naturalists of the 19th century, the precise travel itineraries of the objects between Australia and France (names of the ships, taxation documents, etc).

4 - INTEREST OF THE THOZET COLLECTION AND ARCHIVES FOR THE ARC PROGRAM

Most of Thozet's collection, donated to the Museum de Lyon (today part of the MDC collection), come from the Rockhampton area but the two Nulla Nulla and some human remains could possibly have come from the northern part of the region near Townsville. This needs to be verified by a specialist of Queensland material culture and a precise study of Thozet's letters and archives.

Thozet used to collect objects directly from indigenous sources, mainly around the Rockhampton area (but not only) and indirectly from his friends and colleagues in north and south Queensland. Thozet precisely noted the geographical origin, material (precise types of wood or stone) techniques of fabrication, vernacular names of the objects and in some cases, the indigenous interpretation of the object and its design. His mail exchanges also indicated the precise itinerary by which his material was sent to Europe. Most of this remains in the letter attached to the objects. Connection with the Cairns region will possibly be found through the letters as Thozet writes about other naturalists in the region, connections with miners near Cooktown in regards to local rock art findings. Thozet also collected at least one human skull from the Cape York region which supposedly links with the northern part of the state.

Those connections could be deepened by a close study of the letters and other material (photographs) owned or sent to the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris. Thozet's scientific publications in the Bulletin de la Société d'Acclimatation de Paris should also be studied.

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