

Transactions and Transformations: artefacts of the wet tropics, North Queensland

Edited by Shelley Greer, Rosita Henry, Russell McGregor and Michael Wood



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Transactions and Transformations: artefacts of the wet tropics, North Queensland

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COVER

Cover image: Rainforest Shield. Queensland Museum Collection QE246, collected from Cairns 1914.
Traditional Owners, Yidinji People

NOTE

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The ARC Discovery project 'Objects of Possession: Artefacts Transactions in the Wet Tropics of North Queensland 1870-2013' research team standing next to some *Bagu* in the Cairns institute.
Left to Right: Bard Aaberge (PhD candidate on the ARC project), Shelley Greer, Russell McGregor, Maureen Fuary, Trish Barnard, Mike Wood, Corinna Erkenbrecht, Rosita Henry.

Connections, Transactions and Rock Art within and beyond the Wet Tropics of North Queensland

Alice BUHRICH, Felise GOLDFINCH and Shelley GREER

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This paper explores past connections of Aboriginal people within what is now known as the Wet Tropics, a coastal strip of tropical rainforest in northeast Australia. As a result of historical and ethnographic descriptions the rainforest is often defined as a 'cultural zone'. The proclamation of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, based on environmental parameters, has exaggerated the idea of the rainforest as a cultural boundary. We propose that in the past, Aboriginal connections were multifaceted, multifunctional and multidirectional, extending beyond the Wet Tropics boundaries. We use rock art to illustrate connections within and beyond the rainforest. For example, decorated shields, an iconic item of rainforest material culture, are depicted in rock art assemblages south of the rainforest boundary. Are the shield paintings out-of-place or do they illustrate networks of connection? We examine rock art motifs found in rainforest areas and compare them with those found in other rock art regions in North Queensland. We identify, for example, that sites located in the eastern rainforest are dominated by painted anthropomorphs (people) and zoomorphs (animals) in the silhouette style similar to figurative rock art of southeast Cape York Peninsula. We suggest that, like other areas, there were connections between cultural groups within the rainforest but that these same groups had links that went beyond this environmental zone. We further propose that the proclamation of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area has particularly influenced non-Aboriginal understandings of the past within this region.

☐ Identity, rock art, shields, boundaries, Aboriginal heritage, Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

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This paper is concerned with the idea of 'boundaries' and their effects on our understanding and interpretation of the Aboriginal world of North Queensland. The idea that in the past Aboriginal social groups were primarily defined within specific two-dimensional geographic areas is perhaps subconscious (or unstated) in Australian archaeology. For example, within rock art studies, there has been a focus on identifying rock art 'regions' or 'provinces' which is suggestive of the latter. Recently, Taçon (2013), Brady and Bradley (2014) and Cole (2016) have drawn attention to some of the limitations inherent in the idea of provinces based on rock art style. This paper continues this line of thinking, suggesting that the creation of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WHA) in North Queensland, in conjunction with formal recognition of rights in land, has caused a much sharper line to be drawn around 'Rainforest Aboriginal People' than perhaps previously existed. This is not to say that proclamation of the WHA has not been beneficial; certainly the protected area provides opportunities for Aboriginal people to participate in management. However, this paper suggests that some consideration of different conceptualizations of boundaries should be considered. It draws on evidence primarily from rock art, but also linguistics, material culture and governance to examine the 'boundary issue' and attempts to provide some time depth to this discussion.

We begin by establishing the relevance of rock art and regional identity, then provide a history of descriptions of rainforest people, and illustrate how these depictions of Aboriginal identity changed in relation to the development of the environmental movement. Like McGregor (this volume), we propose that, much like 'regional style zones' in rock art, the idea of a rainforest 'cultural bloc' is a social construct influenced by ethnographic notions of Aboriginal people as part of the natural environment. We build on McGregor's description of how ethnographic representations defined 'rainforest Aboriginal people' and illustrate the role of the environmental movement and world heritage listing in the development of contemporary rainforest Aboriginal

identities. We present case studies that demonstrate connections between rainforest rock art and rock art to the south, north and west. For example, the depiction of rainforest shields in rock art to the south of the rainforest zone suggests significant exchange beyond 'environmental boundaries' (Goldfinch, 2014). Investigations suggest that in some respects, eastern rainforest rock art resonates with the rock art found in southeast Cape York Peninsula, while western rainforest rock art has closer ties to the west. These case studies suggest multifaceted, multifunctional and multidirectional connections that extend beyond the environmental boundary of rainforest. Our third case study investigates the implications of aligning environment with culture where previously such boundaries may not have existed. Placement of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji estate within the Wet Tropics WHA and Western Yalanji within Cape York Peninsula illustrates the conflict between environmental, administrative and cultural boundaries.

We are particularly concerned with presenting a picture of complexity; that is, that past and present Aboriginal people had strong and binding relationships that operated on many levels. These relationships also operated across considerable areas, beyond the arbitrary boundaries imposed by contemporary, western-oriented notions and institutions. For the most part, Aboriginal people probably operated as small local groups connected through kinship, but with cross-cutting ties forged by marriage and ceremonial relationships cemented by exchange. These relationships were not determined by environmental zones; rather, cultural similarities were (and continue to be) most likely based on relationships. This is evident in Williams' (1982) discussion of Yolgnu boundaries and permissions. Williams suggests that boundaries exist for managerial purposes, but that they do not indicate exclusive rights. She shows the complex nature of Yolgnu boundaries and that while they may be (loosely) based on environmental or ecological zones, it is the relationships of individuals and groups, based on certain principles of land allocation that influences the way that people might be found

across the landscape. These principles are based on kinship, religious affiliation, spirit origins (e.g. foetal animation), affinal links and those claimed through the female line as well as other circumstances such as requests based on needs. As a result, estates may be made up of 'non-contiguous lands' (Williams, 1982: 138-141). These arrangements are forged by negotiation (in some cases in ritual contexts) and thus may change. In terms of geographic boundaries, Williams (1982: 146) states that:

Boundaries are, in general, only as precise as they need to be, and they may be precise or imprecise for a number of reasons... Reticence to locate precise boundaries may even reflect concern about the consequences of doing so.

This paper explores evidence for such relationships between Aboriginal people living in (what is now) the Wet Tropics and their neighbours, primarily through rock art. Our aim is to bring relationships rather than boundaries into focus in relation to archaeological interpretation but perhaps also for those managing aboriginal cultural heritage within protected areas within the Wet Tropics.

ROCK ART AND REGIONAL IDENTITY

Information Exchange theory has been applied to stylistic analyses of rock art to identify chronological, environmental and social boundaries in Aboriginal Australia by a number of researchers. The Information Exchange theory, described by Wobst (1977, 1999) and extended by Sackett (1982, 1985, 1990) and Wiessner (2008), is based on the structuralist philosophy that symbols, such as rock art, are a type of 'language', which to some extent can be deciphered independent of ethnography (Conkey, 1990). Maynard (1976) developed a model for cultural change over time based on differences in rock art which she proposed developed from a homogeneous Panaramittee style, found across Australia, to Simple Figurative and then more heterogeneous Complex Figurative styles. Stylistic analyses of rock art have since demonstrated that

Maynard's model is overly simplistic and distinct stylistic art traditions existed in the Pleistocene (Mulvaney, 2013), however Maynard's pioneering work suggested that style in rock art could be used to model cultural change across time (and perhaps space) in Aboriginal Australian archaeology.

Rock art style models have also been integrated with models of environmental change and resource availability. Smith (1992) proposed that resource rich areas have more heterogeneous rock art, while areas with fewer resources have more homogeneous symbolism, reflecting the need for cooperation and shared resources. In North Queensland, Smith's model was used to explain Late Holocene differences in rock art style across the Mitchell-Palmer drainage boundary. To the north, highly stylised 'Quinkan' figurative motifs feature in the resource rich sandstone plateaus while non-figurative forms dominate in the savannah environment to the south (David & Chant, 1995; Morwood & Hobbs, 1995). David and Lourandos (1998) argued that regional rock art boundaries in North Queensland developed as a result of social change in the mid-Late Holocene as people used rock art symbols to convey social identity. However McDonald and Veth's (2014) analysis of Pilbara rock art found little relationship between rock art style and language and instead proposed symbolic differences reflect environmental boundaries between the Pilbara and the Western Desert regions and possibly developed in the earliest phase of occupation.

Critics of Information Exchange theory question whether information contained in rock art can be 'read' by outsiders such as archaeologists. Classifying attributes of rock art is an inherently subjective process and as 'outsiders' we can never know which attributes were significant to the culture in which they were created, and therefore which attributes to measure (Bednarik, 2007: 11). Officer's (1992: 10) study of regional attributes of rock art styles in southeast New South Wales found multiple boundaries of style which varied according to the attributes chosen and the scale analysed. He found the rock art assemblage reflected complex patterns of social relationships, cultural affiliations

and ceremonial networks that did not necessarily coincide and therefore was not particularly useful in identifying distinct cultural regions. Ethnographic data also provides a different perspective on archaeological observations of rock art style in the Gulf of Carpentaria where the distribution of specific motifs reflects social networks such as kinship and ceremonial ties (Brady & Bradley, 2014). Brady and Bradley's (2014) research reflects a movement towards fine grained analysis of rock art within Indigenous frameworks (see also Hampson, 2015; Sanz et al., 2009; Taçon & Chippendale, 1998).

The literature demonstrates that analysis of rock art style can provide information about past relationships although there is some debate over whether environmental (David & Chant, 1995; McDonald & Veth, 2014; Smith, 1992) or ethnographic (Brady & Bradley, 2014; Hampson, 2015) information are more significant in identifying rock art style. The rainforests of northeast Queensland offer a number of opportunities to explore the relationship between rock art style and identity. The rainforests are thought to have been settled permanently in the Late Holocene, by which time regional styles of rock art were already firmly entrenched in surrounding areas (Cosgrove et al., 2007; David & Lourandos, 1998). Thus, a specific style or styles of rock art were likely part of the cultural repertoire of the first permanent rainforest inhabitants. Applying Smith's (1992) approach, rock art style in areas of relatively abundant resources should be heterogeneous, reflecting 'closed' or bounded social networks and more intensive communication. In the rainforest, the nuts and seeds that formed a high proportion of people's diets provided a high carbohydrate source that allowed intensive occupation of the rainforest environment (Tuechler et al., 2014). Following Smith (1992), rock art style in the rainforest should be heterogeneous; and given the effect of high humidity on preservation it is likely to be relatively recent (Ward et al., 1999). In addition, previous research on ethnographic rainforest shields has demonstrated the use of visual culture to convey social identity through highly stylised designs (Abernethy, 1984; Hale, 1989). The question is, did rock art have the same function?

NORTH, SOUTH, CENTRAL: DIVISIONS WITHIN THE RAINFOREST

It is important at this stage to clarify what is meant, in the contemporary context, by the term 'rainforest people'. Divisions of north, south and central rainforest areas have changed in the context of historical and political considerations and there are variations in the way that rainforest boundaries are defined. Although tropical rainforest environments extend from Lockerbie Scrub at the tip of Cape York to Eungella National Park near Mackay, the Wet Tropics WHA boundary was drawn around a coastal strip from Helenvale, south of Cooktown, to Paluma, north of Townsville, and west to Ravenshoe (figure 1). As the World Heritage Area was declared on the basis of natural values, the boundaries were defined on the basis of natural parameters. Today, this is largely the area within which Aboriginal people define themselves as 'rainforest people', though in the past, Aboriginal estates crossed environmental zones and few were confined only to rainforest environments.

In the nineteenth century, ethnographers such as Lumholtz (1889), Meston et al. (1889) and Mjöberg (2015 [1918]) identified a rainforest material culture from south of the Russell River to Cardwell, and west to the Atherton and Evelyn Tablelands. This was considered the core rainforest area (e.g. Mjöberg, 2015 [1918]). In research just prior to the World Heritage declaration, Abernethy (1984) distinguished three stylistic zones in relation to designs on ethnographic rainforest shields: northern, central and southern zones, centred respectively on Cairns, Innisfail and Cardwell. Some recent archaeological work in rainforest areas has used these zones (e.g. Cosgrove et al., 2007: 151) while others use the Wet Tropics WHA boundary to define a rainforest cultural zone which includes Bloomfield in the north (e.g. Best, 2003). This suggests that the World Heritage boundaries have influenced the way rainforest culture is identified in some academic work.

Today the Rainforest Aboriginal People's Alliance identifies Aboriginal groups within the three Wet

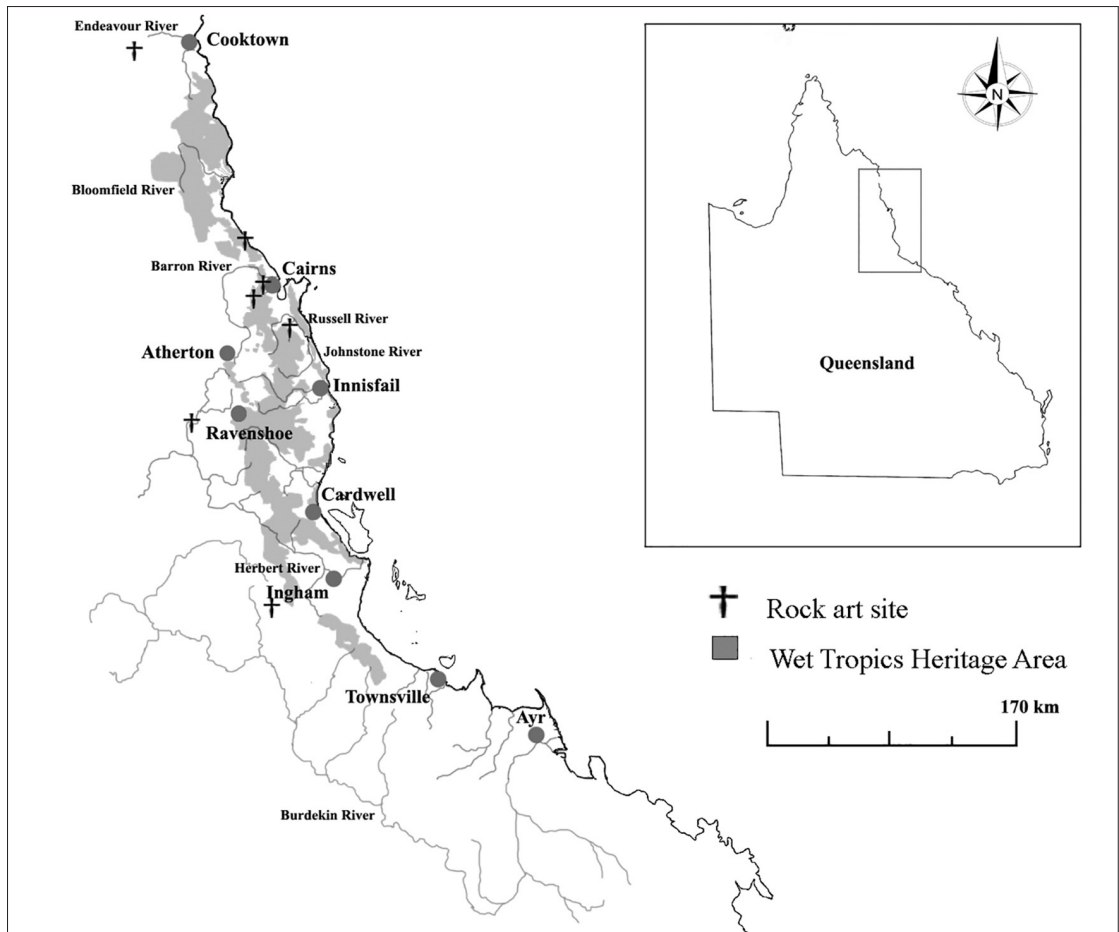


FIG. 1. Map of Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and rock art complexes recorded by A. Buhrich.

Tropics WHA zones based on administrative and political affiliation. Thus the Eastern Kuku Yalanji estate, from Mossman to Cooktown, is in the northern zone, represented by Jabalbina Prescribed Body Corporate. The central zone extends from Mossman to Innisfail and includes part of the Atherton Tablelands. The southern zone incorporates the estates of six Aboriginal groups from Tully south to Paluma and is represented by Giringun Aboriginal Corporation. By aligning themselves in this way Aboriginal people have maximised their ability to utilise resources, manage funding, negotiate with government bodies and advocate equitable involvement in land.

‘WILD AS THE FORESTS’: CONCEPTS OF RAINFOREST IDENTITY

Explorer Christie Palmerston’s description of rainforest people ‘as wild and uncultured as the forests they occupy’ reflects the notion of Aboriginal people as a component of the natural environment (Pannell, 2008). According to nineteenth century ethnographers, if Aboriginal people were a natural part of the ecology, then it followed that an environment that harboured strange and unusual plants and animals would also harbour a unique Aboriginal culture and their observations of unusual artefacts, people’s apparent short stature

and their nut based diet seemed to confirm this. Although people living in the rainforest did not consider themselves a unified society, nineteenth century European ethnographers identified distinct characteristics that contributed to the concept of 'rainforest Aboriginal people'.

In the description of an expedition to the Bellenden Ker Range, Meston et al. (1889: 18) described Aboriginal peoples' short and wiry appearance and 'unsurpassed' tree-climbing agility. Lumholtz (1889) noted differences between 'rainforest' and other Aboriginal groups, although he attributed large noses, wiry hair and small stature to 'mixture with the Papuans'. The idea of a 'rainforest people' appears in the account of Mjöberg's 1913 expedition to Queensland's tropical rainforests, where his objective was, in part, to document the rapidly disappearing 'Stone Age' people (Mjöberg, 2015 [1918]). For Mjöberg, the tropical rainforest started at Mount Tambourine, near Brisbane, but the genuine rainforest area was around Cairns with the Atherton Tableland as its heart. Mjöberg believed the differences he observed in rainforest people's physical appearance and material culture to be the result of their adaptation to the unique environment. In the 1930s Tindale and Birdsell (1941) suggested that people in the rainforest were remnants of a 'pygmy' race, based on blood samples, cranial measurements and photographic images, pushed into rainforest environments by more recent 'waves' of migrants. They argued that rainforest people were a unique 'genetic class' of people that they called the 'Barrineans', 'Negritos' or 'Pygmies' to reflect their 'un-Aboriginality' (Birdsell, 1993: 35-6; Tindale & Birdsell, 1941; Tindale, 1959). However, this notion of the rainforest as a distinct cultural zone with unique material culture and people was not universally accepted.

Material culture collected from the area we now associate with rainforest Aboriginal people was never homogeneous. Roth (in Khan, 1993, 1996) identifies differences in material culture, particularly between the Eastern Kuku Yalanji at Bloomfield River and the central rainforest Dyirbal and Yidin speakers. For example Eastern Kuku Yalanji used rainforest shields and swords, but Yalanji shields were more

rectangular and larger than those found further south. Anderson (1996: 79) found that Eastern Yalanji's language, technology and trading links were closely tied to southeast Cape York Peninsula, and reported 'it may be misleading to speak of "rainforest culture", in the sense of a wholly common material culture among the Aboriginal groups who lived in the North Queensland rainforest'. Linguistic studies further highlight the differences, rather than homogeneity, in rainforest cultures.

Today, language is synonymous with identity in Aboriginal Australia. In the 1960s, when Dixon began recording Aboriginal languages in the rainforest, he found vast differences between four major language families based on grammar, vocabulary, loan words and mutual intelligibility (Dixon, 1983; see also Dixon, 1991, 2008, 2015). In central, northern, southern, and western rainforest areas, Dixon (2008) identified language families that were as different from each other as English and Welsh, but also described language alliances that might not have been recognised previously. Using linguistic evidence, Dixon (2008) hypothesised that rainforest people had moved into the rainforest from the north (Yidin speakers), south (Dyirbal speakers) and west (Mbarbarrum speakers) (figure 2). Dixon identified a new model of rainforest identity. Speaking at a Rainforest Aboriginal Network meeting in 1993, Ngatjon Elder Ernie Raymont described the implications of Dixon's work in forming new alliances based on linguistic research. Raymont explained that Dixon's work, which identified seven Dyirbal-speaking dialects, encouraged a new way of thinking about rainforest tribal relationships:

All that time we were thinking we were all strangers and we were all enemies and that's the attitude I was brought up with when I was a kid in the camp at Malanda from the old people...So it's only in the last 10 years as Prof Dixon went amongst our people and wrote books about it, that we have come together and start talking to one another and all those years we thought we all enemies talking different tribal dialects. (Raymont, cited in Pannell, 2008: 64)

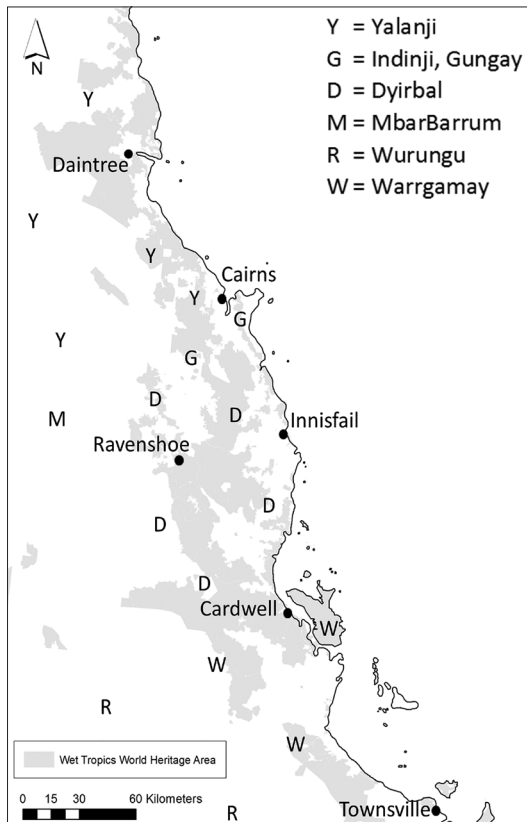


FIG. 2. Language map of the rainforest area after Dixon 1983: Map 1.

Concepts of Aboriginal rainforest identity have changed in response to ethnographic descriptions, academic theory and linguistic evidence. The interest in rainforest identity in many ways reflects the fascination with the distinct plants and animals found in the rainforest environment. The primary aim of ethnographers such as Lumholtz (1889), Mjöberg (2015[1918]) and Meston et al. (1889) was the collection of scientific samples and museum specimens, which extended to observations of Aboriginal customs and collecting Aboriginal material culture. Political and social attitudes also influence the way rainforest culture is defined, exemplified by the drawing of the Wet Tropics world heritage boundary. Although the movements of people in the past are hard to confirm, the complex linguistic situation suggests that the rainforest zone, like other areas of Aboriginal Australia, has a dynamic history.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, ENVIRONMENTALISTS & THE WET TROPICS WORLD HERITAGE AREA

The (academic) discrediting of the theories of Tindale and Birdsell and others occurred just prior to the emergence of the environmental movement which coalesced around the campaign to have the Wet Tropics listed as a WHA. The conservation campaign continued for a decade until listing in 1988. From the 1970s to the 1990s there was a heightened activism by Aboriginal people in Australia: land rights legislation was enacted, the Mabo case was fought and won, and native title legislation was introduced. Thus, as the idea of a racially-driven 'rainforest' group evaporated, a new 'environment-focused' group emerged. 'Rainforest' was 'old', distinctive and popular, allowing the original concept (also old, distinctive and popular) to slip easily into the new mould.

Henry (2012: 229) has commented on the way that Indigenous people have provided '...inspiration and guidance on how to formulate an alternative human environmental relationship'. Henry's study of the relationship between Aboriginal people and environmentalists was set within the North Queensland rainforest, focusing particularly on the construction of the Skyrail rainforest cable car that now transports tourists from Cairns to Kuranda above the rainforest canopy (see also Greer & Henry, 1996; Henry, 1998). She comments on the evangelical nature of environmentalism, the focus on universals and the romanticized view that environmentalists often have of Indigenous cultures. On the other hand, Aboriginal people were fighting for some measure of control over their traditional lands and to assert their identities as Aboriginal people at both local and national levels. Thus, the idea of a 'rainforest Aboriginal people' addressed both environmentalist and Aboriginal aspirations.

World heritage listing of the rainforest forced Aboriginal people whose traditional lands were within the protected area to come together as a single entity in negotiations with government, land owners and conservationists. Native title also provided a framework for community and individual identity.

When native title was first introduced, a pan-rainforest claim was considered, but abandoned and today there are 18 native title determinations based on language as well as tribal, clan and even family boundaries (Pannell, 2008; Pert et al., 2015). The composition of Aboriginal rainforest groups is constantly evolving as clans splinter from tribal groups in an effort to have an individual voice in negotiations with government, landholders and land managers.

In 2005, 18 Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups became signatory to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement with national and state departments. The agreement outlined cooperative management of the World Heritage listed rainforest environment between government and Traditional Owners. The rainforest shield design was used by Aboriginal organisations in artwork to ‘symbolise Rainforest Aboriginal people coming together as one voice... to work with government agencies’ (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2005). The use of this iconic rainforest artefact to represent these organisations suggests that today these Aboriginal people draw on notions of ‘rainforest culture’ for their contemporary cultural identity. However, rainforest shield motifs appear in rock shelters *outside* the rainforest zone. The use of rainforest shields to communicate clan identity, depiction in rock art and use in contemporary artwork such as the logo of the Aboriginal Rainforest Council, Girringun Aboriginal Corporation and Rainforest Aboriginal People Alliance demonstrates that the use of the rainforest shield as a symbol is significant for both past and present Aboriginal people in this region.

‘RAINFOREST SHIELDS’ IN THE TOWNSVILLE AREA

The Townsville area is 30 km south of the rainforests of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, within the Dry Tropics which incorporates part of the Burdekin River watershed. The immense watershed of the Burdekin and Herbert Rivers extends from north of the Tully

River to Mackay in the south. Brayshaw (1990: 1) describes it thus:

The north eastern corner of this area abuts the rugged southern perimeter of the once more extensive north Queensland rainforest. Patches of rainforest occur down the coast to Mackay and beyond, while open woodlands clothe the lower gently undulating hills and footslopes to the west and south west.

Ethnographic, material culture and archaeological evidence were incorporated into Brayshaw’s study. She did not take the ‘rainforest’ as the frame for the investigation but rather the Herbert and Burdekin River systems, which include both Wet and Dry tropics. This was Brayshaw’s doctoral study, begun in 1973, completed in 1977 and published in 1990. Thus, Brayshaw’s investigation was undertaken in the window of time that followed the discrediting of Tindale and Birdsell ideas but largely before the campaign for the Wet Tropics WHA. Importantly, Brayshaw (1990) describes intense interactions between people of the rainforest and the Dry Tropics.

Brayshaw provides details on material culture from her study region in 11 museums, mostly in Australia, but also overseas. She notes that these museums hold collections of rainforest shields as well as the club shield, thought to originate in the southern part of the region from Townsville to Mackay. These shield types are significantly different to rainforest shields in terms of size, shape and decoration. Rainforest shields are larger (up to one metre in length), have distinctive ‘banana’ or ‘kidney’ shapes and are highly decorated with various patterning (figure 3). Rainforest shields were typically only produced in the Wet Tropics as they were made from the buttress roots of various fig trees (*Ficus spp.*). However, Brayshaw reports that two rainforest shields were collected in Townsville, an area technically beyond the Wet Tropics. The provenance for one of the shields was given as ‘Townsville’ while provenance for the second is unknown. Contrastingly, there were also other shield types collected in the Wet Tropics area. A distinct club shield was collected in the Rockingham Bay (Cardwell) area, well within the

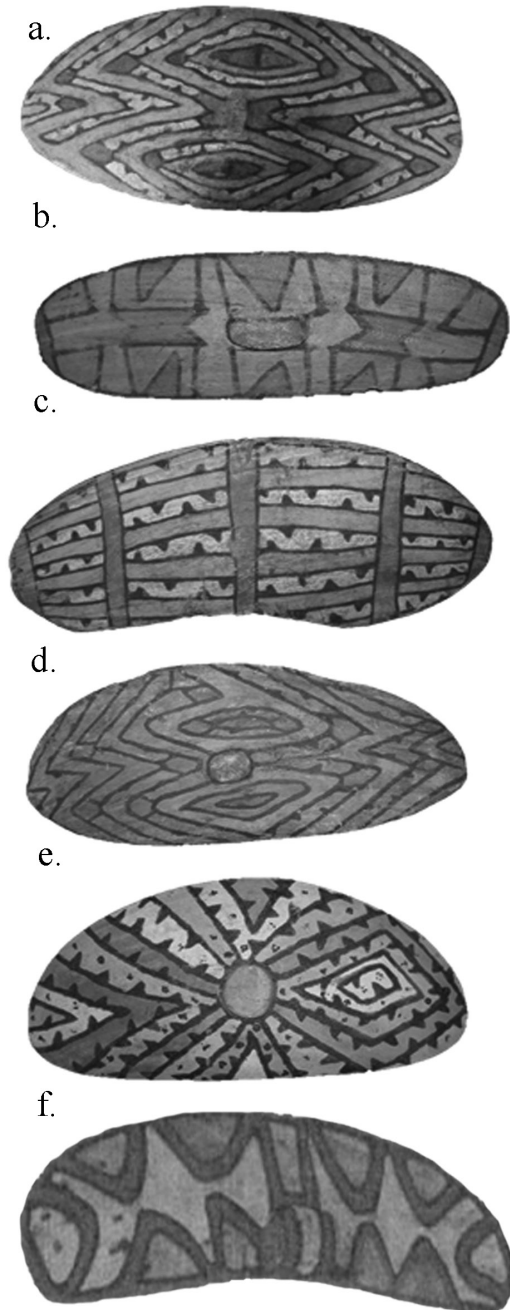


FIG. 3a-e. Rainforest shields held in the Material Culture Collection, James Cook University (Photographs: Rosita Henry); 3f. Rainforest shield held in the Queensland Museum.

rainforest area. The point here is not quantitative – many more rainforest shields were collected in rainforest areas and similarly more club shields were collected in the south. Our interest here is why these shields were apparently ‘out-of-place’.

Rainforest shields have been identified in rock art images in the Townsville area (Brayshaw, 1977, 1990; Hatte, 1992). Again, these motifs appear to be ‘out-of-place’ in the Dry Tropics environment of Townsville, beyond the rainforest where these shields were produced (Abernethy, 1984; Barnard, 2003; Best, 2003; Brayshaw, 1977, 1990; Hale, 1989; Hatte, 1992). Brayshaw (1977, 1990) recorded eight sites that contained shield motifs while Hatte (1992) identified new sites and re-recorded Brayshaw’s sites, finding additional motifs. Hatte suggested that there could be in excess of 50 shield motifs at some Townsville sites, among other motifs (figure 4).

Goldfinch (2014) addressed the apparent anomaly of rainforest shield motifs in rock art outside the rainforest zone, posing a number of questions. These included what is the geographic distribution of these motifs? Are they really depictions of rainforest shields? And why were some Aboriginal groups painting motifs of artefacts produced by their neighbours? To resolve whether the rock art motifs were shields, Goldfinch (2014) examined published recordings of the rock art from the sites of Turtle Rock, Crystal Creek B, Hervey’s Range B and C, Mount Elliot East and West, Burrumbush and Many Peaks recorded by Brayshaw (1977, 1990) and Hatte (1992). She analysed these motifs in relation to attributes identified by Abernethy (1984) and Hale (1989) for rainforest shields from museum collections. In particular, she compared length to breadth ratios, shape, design organization and decorative elements found on the rock art motifs with those identified for the museum shields.

Two studies have investigated the relationship of shield shape and decorative designs to geographic zones within the rainforest. Abernethy (1984) argued that oblong-shaped shields were predominantly found from the Russell River

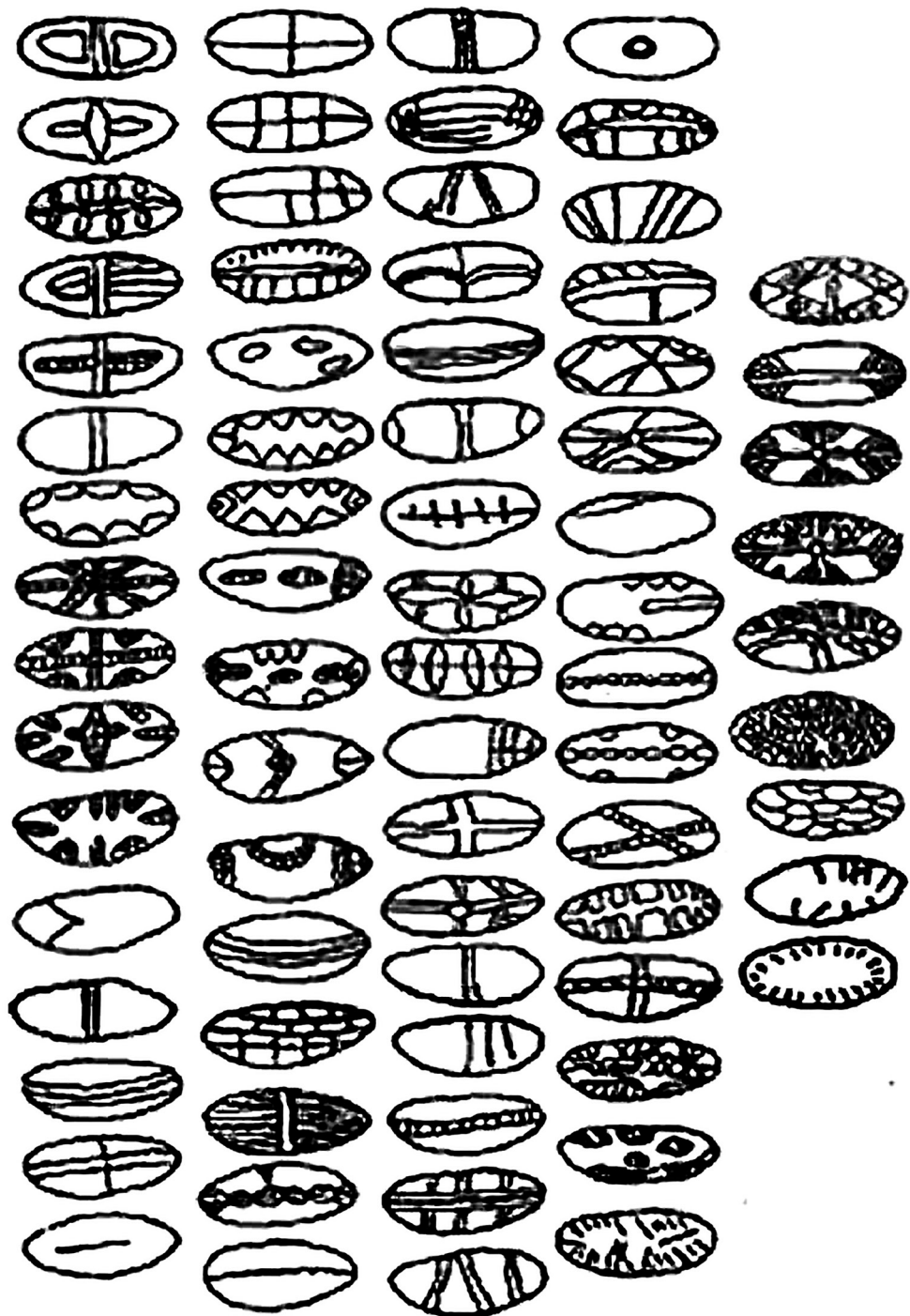


FIG. 4. Rainforest shield motifs in rock art of the Townsville district (after Hatte, 1992: 75).

(Babinda) to north of Cairns, which she called the northern zone. Oval-shaped shields were commonly found in the southern zone south of Russell River to Ingham. Hale (1989) built upon Abernethy's work and produced a detailed analysis of design organization, decorative elements, shield shapes and the relationship between these and language groups identified by Dixon (1983). She observed six shield shape categories, noting that some categories were more likely to be found in Abernethy's northern distribution zone, the Yidiny language group, while others were associated with the southern distribution zone, the Warrgamay language group (Hale, 1989: 91). In addition, both Brayshaw (1977, 1990) and Hale (1989) observed an area of overlap (a central zone) between these two zones within the Dyirbal language group that had shields from all categories. Goldfinch (2014) applied classifications produced by Abernethy and Hale to shield shape and design in rock art motifs to investigate whether the same categories could be identified.

Determining if the rock art motifs depicted in the Townsville sites were rainforest shields was the first step in Goldfinch's (2014) study, after which the 'out-of-place' paintings could be further analysed. Abernethy (1984) had measured maximum length and breadth of museum shields within her study, producing length-breadth ratios for each. Goldfinch similarly measured maximum length and breadth for the shield motifs and found that length to breadth ratios for shield motifs fell within Abernethy's range for museum shields. Similarly, the shapes of the rainforest shield motifs closely resembled those identified by both Abernethy (1984) and Hale (1989). In fact, specific shield shape categories could be discerned in the motifs and interestingly, these most resembled the categories observed in museum shields from Abernethy's northern distribution zone. Similarly, Goldfinch distinguished different categories of design organization, symmetry in design and specific decorative elements that had been identified by Hale (1989) and Abernethy (1984). Again she found that the rock art motifs displayed attributes observed on museum shields.

Goldfinch's (2014) analysis provides convincing evidence that the shield motifs truly represent rainforest shields and suggested that they may resemble museum-held shields produced in the northern zone. The study also revealed that the shield motifs dominate Townsville rock art assemblages and that sites with a higher frequency of shield motifs are located in the south and west of the area. Thus, the shield motifs are found furthest from the areas where similar museum-held shields were produced. Goldfinch (2014) stated that this occurrence provided a persuasive argument that the painters of the shield motifs were acting with agency and suggested active decision making rather than just 'copying' from their neighbours. In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, Goldfinch turned to ethnographic evidence for the region.

Rainforest shields were made at Yarrabah mission in the 1930s for the tourist and museum markets. McConnel (1935) observed their production and design and identified the designs on shields as totemic in nature. Ethnographic research described in Brayshaw (1990) states that rainforest shields were also associated with ceremonial gatherings, male initiation and exchange (figure 5). Such gatherings were undertaken regularly and involved large numbers of people who travelled great distances to attend. James Morrill, a shipwreck survivor who lived with Aboriginal people just south of Townsville for 17 years, reported that large ceremonial gatherings took place at Cape Cleveland, just south of Townsville, in close proximity to the sites of Mt Elliot East and West where many rock art shield motifs were found. At Turtle Rock, the presence of the shield motifs, stone arrangements, human remains and clear quartz (possibly sourced from Hinchinbrook Island to the north) suggests both ceremonial activity and exchange (Campbell, 1978).

There are a number of explanations for the depiction of rainforest shields in rock art near Townsville. Goldfinch (2014) suggested that the rock art motifs could represent ceremonial exchange of shields, especially as was previously noted, two of the museum rainforest shields were collected in



FIG. 5. Photograph of Aboriginal men with shields, Cairns region, taken by Alfred Atkinson circa 1890s (Source: Cairns Historical Society).

the Townsville area. However Goldfinch (2014) suggested they could also be seen as evidence of communication between the painters and those whose designs were represented. Alternatively, northern visitors may have made the paintings during gatherings for ceremony and exchange which might have included exchange of ceremonial performances and ideas, marriage arrangements and tangible objects (such as the shields). While the presence of the shield motifs found outside the rainforest could be explained in a number of ways, it strongly suggests that exchange relations occurred across the Wet and Dry tropics. Taçon (2013) observes intersecting style zones have high value for rock art research and the shield motif art found in the Townsville region has potential to further our understanding about engagement between groups.

ROCK ART WITHIN THE RAINFOREST

As part of her doctoral studies, Buhrich recorded twenty-two rock art sites with seven groups of Aboriginal custodians in and around the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area between 2013-4. This sample comprises over a third of the rock art sites known through published and unpublished records (e.g. Brayshaw, 1975, 1990; Clegg, 1978; Cole & David, 1992; Cosgrove & Raymont, 2002; Cosgrove et al., 2007; David, 1989; Dixon, 1983; Edwards, 2007; Gunn & Thorn, 1994; Horsfall, 1987; Layton, 1992; Trezise & Wright, 1966; Walsh 1986; Woolston & Colliver, 1975). The aim of the research was to identify whether a rainforest rock art style could be identified and how rock art within the rainforest relates to surrounding rock art styles. This research stems from an interest in the relationship between regional art provinces of North Queensland, particularly southeast Cape York Peninsula, Chillagoe and the Einasleigh Uplands.

Ochre has been a presence in the material culture of the earliest rainforest occupants. Ochre is found in all levels of excavated rainforest rock shelters, from 7000 years to the present, although it occurs in greater quantities from 2000 years ago when permanent settlement of the rainforest probably began (Cosgrove et al., 2007; Horsfall, 1987). Although ochre is not exclusively used for rock art, this suggests that visual expression has been an important component of the cultural toolkit since initial occupation.

Similarities have previously been noted between the silhouette style of anthropomorphs found in southeast Cape York Peninsula and rock art sites in the rainforest or its margins. Clegg (1978) compared depictions of people at the site of Bare Hill, in the rainforest near Cairns with the 'Quinkan' figures of the Laura rock art. Horsfall (1987) also noted that the 'frog like' designs from the Johnstone River near Innisfail are also similar to the 'Quinkan' depictions of Laura. Brayshaw (1990) identified that the 'Kennedy characters' found in the Herbert River catchment were also similar. In particular, there is a strong resemblance between the Kennedy character recorded by Brayshaw and the male anthropomorph recorded at Bare Hill, one hundred and fifty kilometres to the north (figure 6). Anthropomorphs at these sites are consistent with Layton's (1992) description of silhouette figures typical of north-eastern Australia.

Rock art in the rainforest zone are primarily found on granite boulders although sandstone, limestone

and basalt were also painted. The dominance of granite rock art shelters reflects the predominance of granite substrate. Sandstone and limestone is limited to the western margins of the study area, defined as within 20km from the current rainforest boundary. Paintings are found on granite boulders on slopes and creek lines and sandstone shelters on escarpments and outliers. A small number of paintings are found on shallow overhangs formed in basalt intrusions and four rock art sites have been recorded in one limestone outcrop in overhangs and caves including dark zone paintings (Winn & Buhrich, 2014). Although most sites are on granite there are a disproportionate number of motifs painted in sandstone shelters. The large numbers of motifs found on sandstone could reflect the better preservation of motifs on this geological substrate and/or the fact that it was a more attractive surface for painting. Rainforest sites tend to be found in clusters with one main site and two to three satellite sites. Primary sites have the largest variety of colour and motif form while satellite sites have a smaller number of motifs often only painted in red.

There is a relatively low density of rock art sites in the rainforest. Using a combination of Buhrich's records, and published and unpublished data, only five sites are recorded per 100 kms². It is likely there are more sites that are not formally reported but nevertheless the total number of sites is nowhere near the density found in the limestone outcrops of Chillagoe, the sandstone escarpments of Laura or the Einasleigh Uplands. Motif counts are relatively low per site. As Table 1 illustrates,

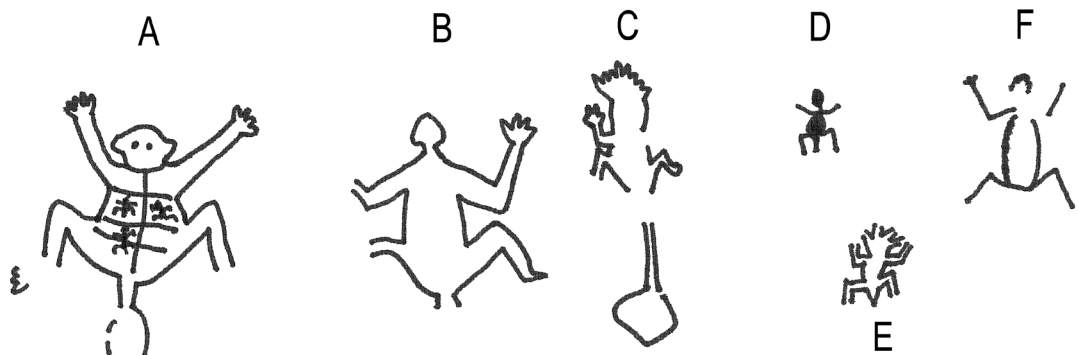


FIG. 6. Anthropomorphs from (A) Laura (Trezise, 1993: 130-131), (B, C) Bare Hill and (D, E, F) Herbert River catchment (after Brayshaw 1990: 128, 142) (not to scale).

Table 1. Maximum, minimum and mean number of individual motifs at rock art sites within each site cluster.

Site Cluster	Maximum	Minimum	Mean
Cairns Coastal	3	2	2.5
Davies Creek	31	5	12.5
Bare Hill	50	2	31
Silver Valley	46	5	19
Mount Claro	119	9	50
Melody Rocks	48	9	22
Mulgrave	11	11	11
Average	44	6	21

the maximum number of motifs at any one site is 119 (Mt Claro 2 site) and the minimum two (Cairns Coastal and Bare Hill sites). Overall the mean maximum of motifs per site is 44 (although this drops to 16 if Mt Claro 2 is excluded) and the minimum mean is six. On average there are 21 motifs per site. This is a relatively small number of motifs per site if compared to sandstone areas such as Laura, where Maynard (1976) counted 941 motifs at just 5 sites and Cole reported an average of 44 motifs per site at Jowalbinna Station (Cole & David, 1992). For the Einasleigh Uplands, Lovell-Pollock (1997) recorded 3049 motifs at 118 rock art sites within 1 km of escarpment along the Robertson River. The extremely low density of sites is one of the challenges for recording rainforest rock art as sites often have to be relocated using sparse information in extreme environments. There is an additional layer of complexity as virtually each cluster of rock art requires consultation and approval from separate Aboriginal groups.

Painting dominates the rainforest rock art corpus although different patterns were observed on the eastern and western sites. Eastern sites, most of which are found on the coast or along rainforest rivers, are all painted. Motifs found at western sites, within 20kms of the current rainforest boundary, show greater diversity of technique with stencils at Mount Claro 2 in the southwest and at Melody Rocks in the northwest. A panel of weathered cupules was also recorded at Melody Rocks (Winn & Buhrich, 2014).

The numbers of figurative and non-figurative motifs are sharply contrasted between east and west sites within this rainforest region. Eastern sites feature anthropomorphs and zoomorphs with a small number of abstract and geometric designs

while western sites have abstract and geometric motifs with a small number of anthropomorphs and zoomorphs (see figures 7, 8 & 9). In terms of the

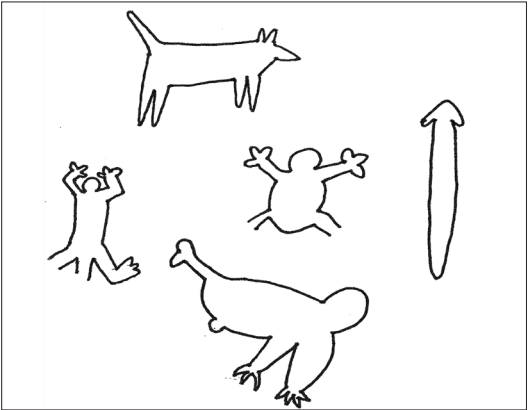


FIG. 7. Sample of figurative motifs from eastern rainforest sites (not to scale).

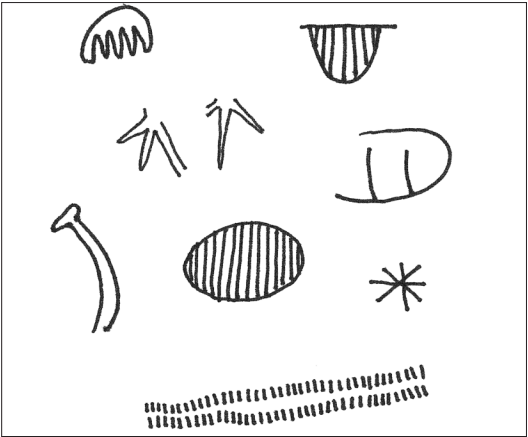


FIG. 8. Sample of non-figurative motifs from western rainforest sites (not to scale).

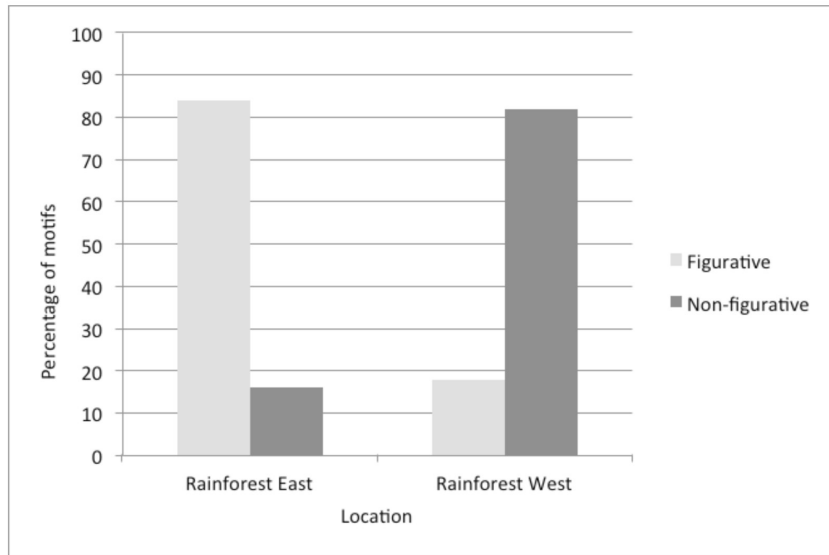


FIG. 9. Percentage of figurative and non-figurative motifs at eastern and western rainforest sites.

ratio of figurative to non-figurative motifs, sites in the eastern section of the rainforest appear to be more like a coastal Cape York Peninsula style that includes Laura, Normanby and Princess Charlotte Bay while western rainforest rock art appears to have more in common with Chillagoe and Ngarrabullgin (Cole, 2016; David, 2002), although not the Einasleigh Uplands which features stencils and engravings (Lovell-Pollock 1997). Although language groups extend from west to east, patterning in the rock art appears to be different, reflecting further cultural complexity.

In his reflections of the role of rock art and regional identity, Hampson (2015) stressed the importance of individual motifs which contain specific meaning. Further work is needed to identify the relevance of individual motifs in rainforest rock art but it is noted that the star motif, identified by Ellwood et al. (2013) as significant motifs at sites around Chillagoe are found at each of the western rainforest sites. Stencils are rare in rainforest rock art, only found at the margins at Mount Claro 2 and Melody Rocks but not at eastern rainforest sites nor Burdekin River art sites to the south, in the Dry Tropics (Brayshaw, 1990). Stencils are common to the west at Laura, Chillagoe and the Einasleigh Uplands and thus their

presence at Mt Claro 2 could indicate engagement or interaction amongst these groups. The dominance of simple figurative silhouette style in the eastern rainforest sites resonates with southeast Cape York Peninsula rock art, particularly from Laura to Endeavour River (Cole, 2016). However the eastern rainforest sites lack some of the distinctive features of southeast Cape York Peninsula rock art such as tracks, sorcery figures and female anthropomorphs.

Rock art in the rainforest and its surrounds does not easily fit into rock art style provinces previously identified for North Queensland. Eastern sites, dominated by paintings of anthropomorphs and zoomorphs, could be considered part of the southeast Cape York Peninsula style province. The dominance of abstract and geometric motifs in western sites suggests similarity with the Ngarrabullgan / Chillagoe style province identified by David (2002). Little similarity has been found between rock art of the rainforest and stenciled rock art and engravings of the Einasleigh Uplands. Trends in rock art style could suggest engagement between coastal rainforest and southeast Cape York Peninsula and western rainforest and Ngarrabullgan/Chillagoe. Today these areas are identified as discrete regions

based on classification of the natural environment. The Wet Tropics, Cape York and Einasleigh Uplands represent three distinct bioregions which form useful administrative boundaries for natural resource management. But Aboriginal cultural boundaries between these regions are not so clear, as the following example demonstrates.

TRADITIONAL BOUNDARIES VERSUS ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES

The Yalanji estate illustrates the disjunction between traditional cultural boundaries and those of contemporary administrative units. Yalanji is spoken over a large area, which incorporates wet tropical coasts, a rainforest tableland and dry, open woodland of southeast Cape York Peninsula. Yalanji people identify themselves as either Eastern (Kuku/Sunrise) or Western (Gugu/Sunset) Yalanji, which are further divided into clan groups who speak different dialects.

Today the Eastern and Western Yalanji estates are managed through different administrative systems. Cape York Land Council represents Eastern Kuku Yalanji, while North Queensland Land Council represents Western Yalanji. Eastern and Western Yalanji estates also have different legislation for protection of heritage sites. As for the rest of Queensland, cultural heritage across the Yalanji estate is protected by the (Queensland) *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*. Western Yalanji heritage is also included in the provisions of the (Queensland) *Cape York Heritage Act 2007* while Eastern Kuku Yalanji, whose estate is primarily within national park, has additional protection through the (Commonwealth) *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. The world heritage nomination proposed for Cape York Peninsula in 2011 could have seen the Yalanji estate divided into two separately nominated world heritage areas, each with different identified values and assessments of cultural significance.

Part of the reason that the Yalanji estate is divided into different administrative areas is that the Mount Windsor Tableland divides the Eastern and Western Yalanji estates. This vast area of forest reserve holds the headwaters of the Daintree, Bloomfield

and Mitchell-Palmer Rivers. It was once crossed by multiple Aboriginal walking tracks, in use until the 1920s, which linked tribes, hunting grounds, resources, campsites, story places and rock art sites (McCracken, 1989). Forestry resources were logged heavily on Mount Windsor until World Heritage declaration in 1988. In fact, protection of Mount Windsor's forestry and mineral resources was an important focus of the environmental movement that led to the World Heritage declaration of the Wet Tropics and the road to Mount Windsor was the site of the first environmental blockade in North Queensland in 1981 (Hill, 2008). It is now managed as a national park, the Mount Windsor Management Statement declaring the intention of maintaining 'the remote wilderness value and significant plant and animal species' with no reference to Aboriginal cultural values (DNPRSR, 2013). Forestry tracks in use prior to world heritage gazettal have not been maintained and access to the area is restricted through a locked gate. Yalanji people have little access to this area, and the traditional walking tracks which presumably once provided access to cultural sites and facilitated ceremonial and social networks are not currently used and are not a focus of current management planning. Despite the conflict between administrative regimes, Eastern and Western Yalanji identify re-establishing cultural links across the two estates as a higher priority now that both groups have gained recognition of native title.

The disjunction between traditional and administrative boundaries has implications for how cultural values are identified, understood and communicated as a result of the availability of resources for cultural heritage management and research. For example, rainforest groups have obtained funding for a series of successful cultural mapping projects which has resulted in training, site recording and defining Aboriginal values within the World Heritage Area. Typical activities on these projects include elders and younger Aboriginal people visiting the sites together, following traditional protocol, documenting histories through film and identifying bush tucker and other cultural elements. Aboriginal groups whose traditional lands lie both within and beyond the World Heritage

Area can only obtain funding for places that fall within it. For coastal groups, if parts of their estate include offshore islands (which are part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area) projects could be funded through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Thus, the rainforest area comprises a complex web of protected areas with differential funding arrangements coupled with areas that do not have such status (or funding). In theory, this suggests that Aboriginal places within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area could be considered more significant simply because more time and resources have been spent on documenting, understanding and communicating values from within the World Heritage Area.

CONCLUSION

This paper argues that Aboriginal connections, past and present, go beyond contemporary administrative or ecological boundaries. It suggests that while there may be reasons for Aboriginal people to embrace the idea of 'rainforest people', it could also be problematic. Aboriginal groups within the rainforest (past and present) have similarities but also differences. Aboriginal people in the region are well aware of the complexities of their relationships and find their own way through such difficulties. Our point here is that non-Aboriginal people are inclined, particularly where there are distinctive ecological zones such as 'rainforest', to draw sharp boundaries that align with environmental parameters. This is probably even more evident in relation to the World Heritage Area where there is a focus on 'universal' values for which World Heritage Areas are protected. As Greer et al. (2002) point out, the *local* values of places and areas, that is their significance and importance to small localized groups, are often neglected, overwhelmed or subsumed within those of stakeholders at the state or global levels.

In the past, such connections were probably reinforced by exchange, particularly ceremonial exchange. Greer et al. (2011, 2015) have highlighted the importance of exchange in Cape York and for areas along the east coast. These papers emphasize

the importance of ceremonial exchange in the development of archaeological interpretation (see for example Lourandos, 1983; McBryde, 1984, 1987; Tibbett 2002). We believe that rock art on both the northern and southern edges of the rainforest point to exchange relations that may have existed in the past. We suggest that these relationships were likely just as important as those within the rainforest.

The challenge for researchers and policy makers is to understand and account for the effect of contemporary boundaries on understandings of the Aboriginal past. We suggest that archaeological investigations and material culture studies that focus on the provenance of artefacts may prove useful in teasing out some of the details of these connections. We are particularly keen to promote the idea that rather than focusing on 'boundaries', we could emphasize networks of engagement that likely existed across ecological zones.

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Walter Edmund Roth: Ethnographic collector and Aboriginal Protector

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Walter Roth ranks among the most prolific collectors of Aboriginal artefacts from North Queensland, including the Wet Tropics, as well as being one of the leading ethnographers in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Australia. He was also one of Queensland's first official Protectors of Aboriginals, appointed immediately after that colony introduced its now-infamous *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897*. This paper explores Roth's twin careers as ethnographic collector and Aboriginal Protector, teasing out the connections and commonalities between the two. It was for his achievements in ethnography and collecting, as well as his medical expertise, that he was appointed to the Protectorship. He carried out both his anthropological work and his administrative duties with determination and dedication. Yet his continuing activities as an ethnographer and collector contributed substantially to his downfall as a senior figure in Aboriginal administration. The paper also positions Roth in the historical context of an evolving Australian anthropology, with particular pertinence to North Queensland.

❏ Walter Roth, ethnographic collecting, Aboriginal protection, North Queensland, Aboriginal artefacts, Australian anthropology

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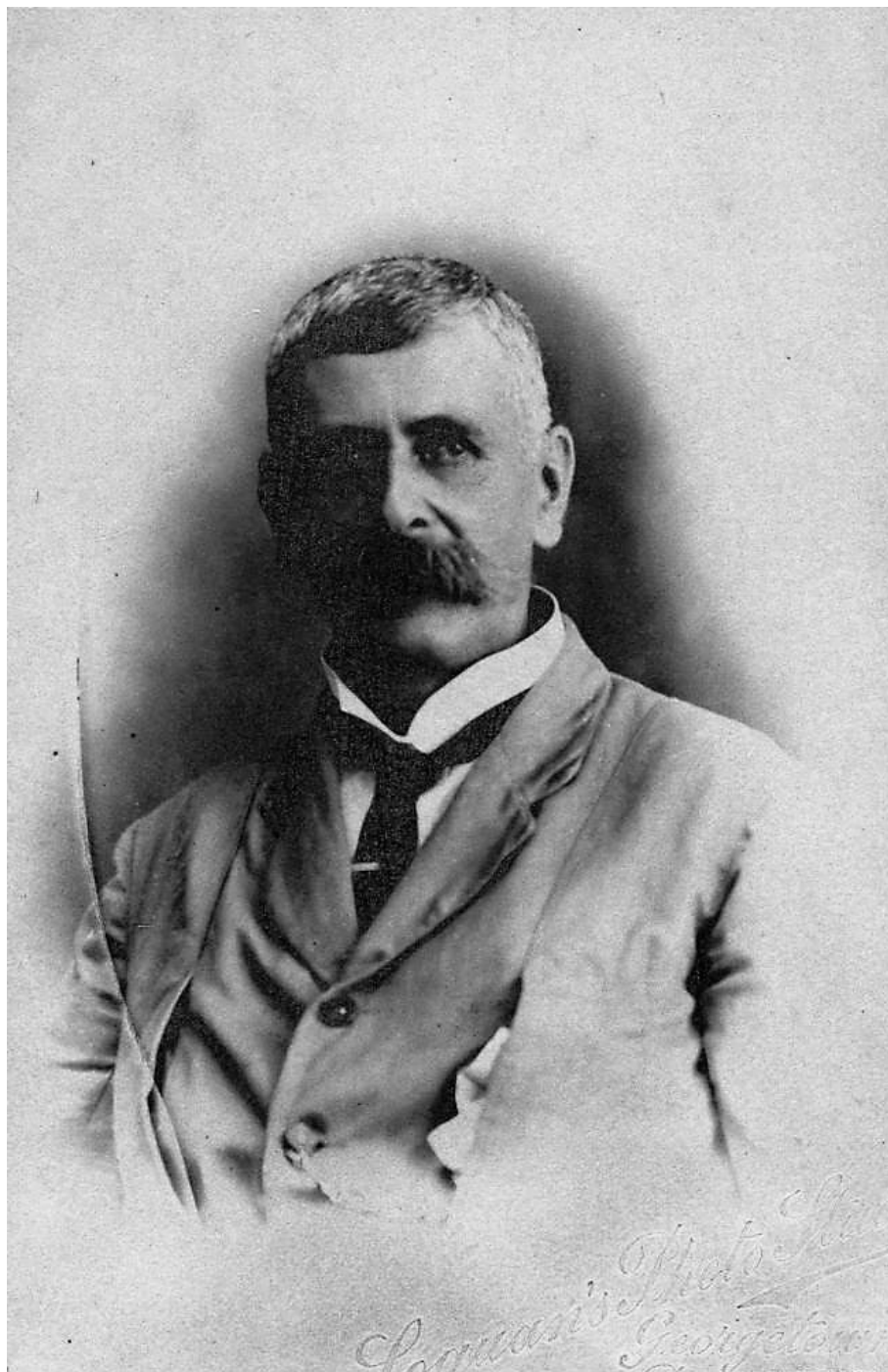


FIG. 1. Walter E. Roth. Loquan's Photo Studio, Georgetown, Guyana, 1918. Source: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. Neg: 158695.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Walter Edmund Roth (1861-1933) was the pre-eminent collector of North Queensland Aboriginal material culture (figure 1). Most of the over 2,500 artefacts he collected in Australia came from North Queensland, and a substantial proportion of these, probably around 500, were from the region now known as the Wet Tropics, particularly from the Atherton Tableland, Bloomfield River, Cairns, Cape Grafton and the Tully River. Items collected from this region include signature artefacts such as bicornual baskets, brightly painted shields, single-handed hardwood swords and bark blankets, as well as more unusual items such as snail-shell knives from Dunk Island, children's toys from Cairns and Cape Grafton, and wooden 'trumpets' from the Bloomfield River (Khan, 1993, 1996). Roth was, as Kate Khan (2008a) characterised him, 'the man who collected everything', and the 'everything' encompassed a remarkably diverse array of artefacts from the Wet Tropics.

Roth was not just a collector; he was also an ethnographer who described in meticulous detail the manufacture and use of the artefacts he collected (and of others he did not collect). Although he published works on Aboriginal languages, rituals, beliefs and social organisation, his most substantial output was in material culture studies and it is primarily in that domain that his reputation as an anthropologist rests. His major anthropological works in Australia are a series of eighteen bulletins on North Queensland ethnography published between 1901 and 1910, and an earlier work of 1897, *Ethnological Studies Among the North-West-Central Queensland Aborigines*. He also wrote five ethnographic reports on the Aboriginal people of specific regions of North Queensland: Princess Charlotte Bay, the Pennefather River, the Middle Palmer, Cooktown and the lower Tully River. Although he does not have the academic stature of his contemporary, Walter Baldwin Spencer, with whom he studied biology at Oxford University in the 1880s, Roth has an assured place among Australia's anthropological pioneers. His ethnographic studies were highly

regarded in his own times, Roth being appointed President of the Anthropology Section of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1902; elected to membership of the anthropological societies of Berlin and Florence in the same year; and appointed Queensland correspondent to the Royal Anthropological Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1904 (Khan, 2008a: 185; Reynolds, 1988). By the time of his death, he had earned a reputation sufficiently substantial to warrant a lengthy obituary by Melville Herskovits in *American Anthropologist* (Herskovits, 1934).

In addition to his roles as collector and ethnographer, Roth was a senior administrator of Queensland Aboriginal affairs, as the first Northern Protector from 1898 to 1904 and the second Chief Protector (succeeding Police Commissioner William Parry-Okeden) from 1904 to 1906. His performance of these roles has been examined by several historians (Ganter & Kidd, 1993; Kidd, 1997: 50-59; Whitehall, 2002) so need not be recounted in detail here. Several aspects, however, are particularly pertinent. Roth had been appointed Northern Protector for his experience and expertise in Aboriginal affairs: his *Ethnological Studies Among the North-West-Central Queensland Aborigines* had convinced the relevant colonial officials that he possessed an appropriate understanding of Aboriginal people, and his work as a medical practitioner among the Aboriginal people of north-western Queensland had convinced the same officials of his dedication to their welfare (Khan, 1993: 12). He carried out his duties as Protector with diligence and determination, enforcing the provisions of the Act with particular rigour in the northern maritime industries where the exploitation of Aboriginal workers and the sexual abuse of Aboriginal women were prevalent. Indeed, he seems to have relished the exercise of authority, regardless of whether it was upon Indigenous or non-Indigenous people, although his authoritarian tendencies coexisted with a sincere commitment to advancing (as he saw it) Aboriginal well-being.

This paper recounts Roth's careers as ethnographic collector and Aboriginal administrator, teasing out the connections between the two. While we are attentive to his role as a leading collector of rainforest Aboriginal material culture, the paper essays a broader assessment of his contribution to, and place in, North Queensland anthropology. This broader picture is essential, we believe, if Roth's contribution to rainforest Aboriginal ethnography is to be properly appreciated. Indeed, the very concept of 'rainforest Aboriginal material culture' is an anachronism, projected back from the vantage point of the early twenty-first century to a turn-of-the-twentieth-century ethnographer who never invoked it. That does not render the concept useless, but it does reinforce the point that historical understanding of Roth's rainforest work demands its contextualisation in his encompassing careers as both collector and Protector.

ETHNOGRAPHER AND COLLECTOR

It was during his tenure as Northern Protector that Roth collected most of his ethnographic specimens, although he began collecting before then. In a letter to Baldwin Spencer dated 10 May 1898 (four months after his appointment as Northern Protector) he stated that he had been collecting in North Queensland for the previous four years and had by then amassed 'about 600 separate objects'.¹ In his 1899 official report as Northern Protector, he noted that his collection now comprised 'upwards of 800 articles' (quoted in Khan, 2008b: 187). By the beginning of 1905 his collection had grown considerably, for in February that year (that is, several months after his promotion from Northern to Chief Protector) he sold 2,000 artefacts and 240 photographic plates to the Australian Museum in Sydney (figures 2 and 3).² Before then, between 1900 and 1903, he had made three donations totalling

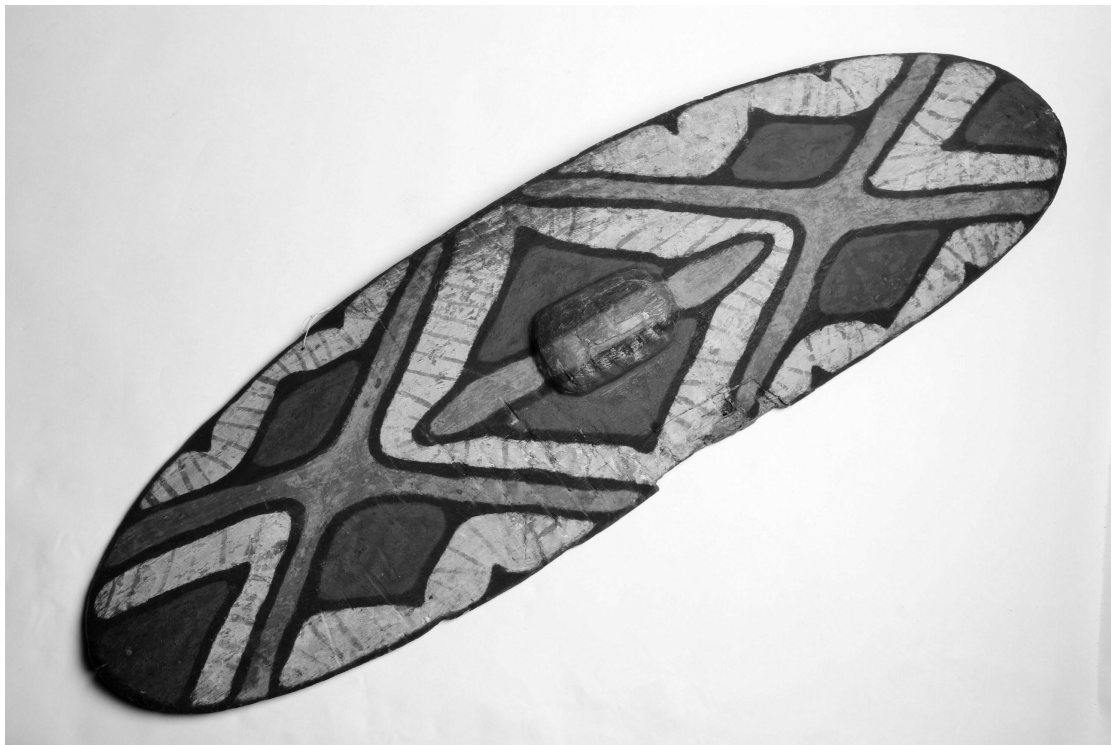


FIG. 2. Rainforest shield, collected by Roth at Cardwell in 1902. Photo by Rebecca Fisher. Source: Australian Museum, Roth Collection: iE03431-001+03.

around 230 artefacts from North Queensland to the Queensland Museum and also gave or sold ethnographic items to the British Museum and other overseas institutions.³

Roth welcomed the opportunities for ethnographic collection and observation offered by the Northern Protectorship. He also appreciated the extent to which the power he exercised as Protector would facilitate his collecting activities. Only weeks after his appointment, he wrote to Baldwin Spencer:

I am indeed a lucky fellow: the Protectorate of the whole Northern and Central Districts is in my hands. The main, and the only drawback is that, travelling about so much and over so large an area, I shall be prevented learning any language thoroughly.⁴

Anthropological research and collecting were specified among his duties, Chief Protector Parry-Okeden directing Roth to make 'from time to time such

local collection of ethnological and anthropological interest as possible' (quoted in Khan, 2008b: 183). However, travelling may have proved more onerous than he had anticipated. His official reports indicate that he maintained a punishing schedule of travel, and while this may have facilitated the collection of a broad sweep of artefacts from around the north, the limited time he could spend in any one place surely limited the kind of ethnographic work he could conduct. Perhaps it was partly for this reason that he focussed on material culture rather than on social structure, descent systems and non-material aspects of culture as the other leading Australian anthropologists of the day – the Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen duo and R.H. Mathews – did.

As a collector, Roth was meticulous, precisely following the scientific protocols of the time. The prescriptions set out in the 1892 edition of the British Association for the Advancement of Science's *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* might have served as a template for his collecting practices:

It is of importance to obtain from natives any portable specimens of their handiwork, tools, weapons, dress, ornaments, fetishes, &c., and where possible, the native descriptions of the objects, whether the tools, for instance, are for any special work, &c. Models should be secured where the originals cannot be obtained or are too large for transport, e.g., canoes, houses, &c. Not only are the finished objects worth collecting, but also the raw material used in their manufacture, where this has any special character ... The commonest things in use are generally the most valuable from an ethnological point of view, though masterpieces of native art are of artistic value, and therefore should not be despised. At the first moment of leisure the objects should be labeled with the locality where they were obtained, and their use, and any other particulars. (quoted in Petch, 2007: 21)

In line with this advice, Roth collected not only completed artefacts but also samples of the raw material from which they were made and examples of items in a part-finished state. For example,



FIG. 3. Bicornual basket, collected by Roth at Atherton in 1898. Photo by Rebecca Fisher. Source: Australian Museum, Roth Collection: iE014913+02s.

the Roth Collection at the Australian Museum includes a partially completed bicornual basket from Atherton, collected in 1898 (figure 4). He also collected implements and utensils that incorporated materials of European provenance such as iron and cotton cloth. Although these constituted only a small proportion of his collections (Rowlands, 2011), Roth gave no indication that he considered such items inauthentic or lacking in worth (Khan, 2008a: 181-183).

Exactly how he acquired the items in his collection is unclear, though probably most were obtained by barter, a standard item of exchange at the time being tobacco. In April 1900 he informed C.W. de Vis, curator of the Queensland Museum, that he was given an annual allocation of tobacco 'in order to purchase curios from the blacks for your museum'.⁵ Tobacco seems to have been Roth's main medium of exchange, although he also paid for artefacts with items such as cloth and beads (Robins, 2008: 176). Whether he also paid for his informants' time – an

essential component of his ethnography since Roth sought not merely to collect things but to explain their manufacture and use – is unknown. In any case, the extraordinary powers with which he was vested as Protector undoubtedly enhanced his capacity to collect both objects and information from the Aboriginal subjects of the Act. Roth also built up his collections by exchanges with other collectors and institutions. In September 1897 he advised the curator of the Queensland Museum that a 'complete aboriginal male skeleton has come into my possession: I shall be glad to offer it to the Museum in exchange for some aboriginal things of which I am in want to complete my own collection'. A letter from Roth a few days later indicates that the museum had accepted his offer.⁶

Apart from the very real advantages conferred by his official position, Roth's techniques of ethnographic collecting were unexceptional for his times. Trade, barter and exchange were the standard means of acquiring Aboriginal artefacts (Erckenbrecht et al., 2010; Henry, 2015; Robins, 2008). It was his omnivorous approach to collecting, combined with the precision and exactitude of his observations on the production of material goods, that set Roth apart from the majority of his fellow ethnographers in Australia. Generally shying clear of overt theorising, his ethnographies were devoted to the specific and the concrete: to material culture as a domain worthy of scientific study in and of itself rather than merely as an adjunct to sociological speculation or as a commentary on curios.

Roth's capacity for keen observation and his attentiveness to detail are strikingly evident in his ethnographic bulletins. Occasionally he seems to have been guessing on the basis of limited or fragmentary knowledge, but usually the data are dense. For Roth (1901), the primary purpose of his ethnographic bulletins was to document 'the rapidly-increasing quantity of scientific material which, in accordance with the Home Secretary's instructions, has been collected since my appointment as Northern Protector of Aborigines'. These bulletins are essentially printed databases and the knowledge contained therein is arranged in encyclopaedic

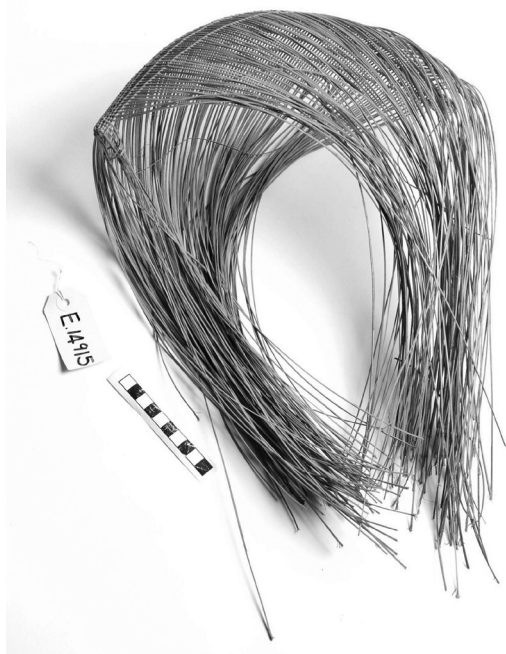


FIG. 4. Bicornual basket in process of manufacture; collected by Roth at Atherton in 1898. Photo by Rebecca Fisher. Source: Australian Museum, Roth Collection: iE014915+01.

fashion (Fuery 2004a). Emphasis is firmly on the specific rather than on any generalisations that may be drawn from the data, and each bulletin is organised around a central topic in which ‘types’ of implements, weapons, games, activities and so forth are explored in detail across North Queensland. The arrangement seems to have been designed to facilitate scientific comparisons across Queensland, Australia and other parts of the world, and may have been influenced by Roth’s familiarity with the Pitt-Rivers’ system of museum display from his years at Oxford in the 1880s.

Roth conducted an essentially comparative and interdisciplinary anthropology of a kind that was side-lined, and even disparaged, after the watershed years of the 1920s when long-term fieldwork in a single society became the methodological and theoretical norm in British anthropology. It was from this point that anthropology began sequestering itself as a discipline in its own right. Roth, however, ‘did ethnography’ as it was done at the turn of the twentieth century, before the disciplinary shutters were put up; and as Fuery (2004a) has discussed elsewhere, he was a member of what Morphy (1997: 27) characterised as a ‘dispersed community of scholars who saw themselves as having complementary and overlapping roles in pioneering a new science rather than as people occupying different positions of sub and super-ordination in some global academic hierarchy’.

While Roth’s anthropology was similar to, and congruent with, that of his contemporaries, it was also distinctive in crucial respects. He did not carry out field-based studies of single societies like those of Spencer and Gillen in Central Australia and the Gulf of Carpentaria (Austin-Broos, 1999; Fuery, 2004a; Mulvaney, 2008; Mulvaney et al., 1997, 2000) or of Haddon, Rivers and other members of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait (Fuery, 1998, 2004a, 2004b; Herle & Rouse, 1998). Yet while the Spencer and Gillen and Haddon and Rivers studies differ from Roth’s in the specificity of their ethnographic focus, they show similar surveying, collecting, classifying and comparative dimensions to those in Roth’s ethnographic bulletins.

Indeed, they all exhibit the characteristic of the seeing-eye of the anthropologist: the observer of, rather than participant in, the society in question. Of this approach, Johannes Fabian (2001: 54) writes:

Above the ground, the seeing eye became the root metaphor of knowledge. The observing gaze [of the anthropologist] *delivered the material; visible order created by classification provided its meaning.* (our emphasis)

As the scientific ‘seeing eye’, Roth neither saw nor tried to see ‘societies’ in the way Spencer and Gillen or Haddon and Rivers did. Rather, he saw technologies, techniques, material means of winning a livelihood, as well as, to a lesser extent, languages, rituals and other discrete elements of Aboriginal cultures (figures 5 and 6). He neither purveyed a holistic vision of an Aboriginal society nor pretended to do so.

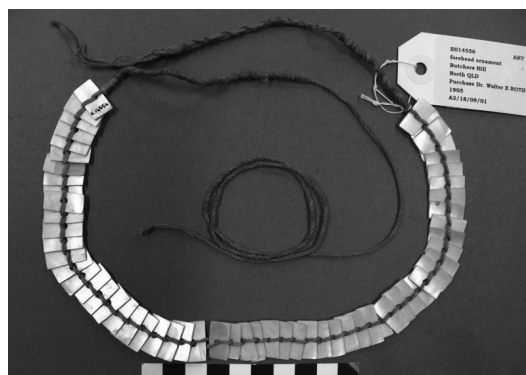


FIG. 5. Nautilus shell forehead band, collected by Roth at Butchers Hill in 1898. Photo by Rebecca Fisher. Source: Australian Museum, Roth Collection: iE014556+01.



FIG. 6. Model canoe, made at Yarrabah; collected by Roth at Cape Grafton in 1897. Photo by Rebecca Fisher. Source: Australian Museum, Roth Collection: iE013451+03.

One consequence of Roth's ethnographic mode is that although the Roth Collection at the Australian Museum includes possibly the most comprehensive collection of rainforest Aboriginal artefacts in the world, Roth's own commentaries on these artefacts convey very little sense of the rainforest environment or of how the objects related to that environment. His ethnographic bulletins describe in painstaking detail the manufacture and use of implements and weapons which have come to be regarded as exemplary of rainforest people, including large painted shields, hardwood swords, woven cane bicornual baskets and beaten bark blankets. Verbal descriptions are supplemented with carefully executed line drawings and in some instances photographs. However, the artefacts are decontextualised from the environment in which they had been manufactured and used. Certainly, no concept of rainforest Aboriginal people, as a sub-set of the larger category of 'the Aboriginal race', emerges from Roth's writings. His practice of publishing his findings as vast catalogues, organised in terms of categories of material objects or activities, militates against any such concept of distinctive Aboriginal types. Roth did categorise Aboriginal people in various ways: in terms of broad geographical area (for example 'North-West-Central Queensland blacks'); more specific geographic locators (for example 'Bloomfield Blacks' or 'natives of Dunk Island'); and by using peoples' own terms for themselves, often in combination with place-names (for example 'Kuongganji-Cape Grafton blacks' and 'Koko Yellanji-Bloomfield natives'). He was meticulous in specifying the area and/or group from which artefacts were collected and activities described, since this information was crucial to his systematic documentation of Indigenous material culture. However, he made very few, if any, attempts to explicitly relate a group's physical environment, rainforest or otherwise, to its culture, material or intangible.

Even when Roth focussed on a specific Aboriginal group, his discussion decontextualised people from their physical environment. His one-hundred-page 'Scientific Report ... on the Natives of the (Lower) Tully River' gives copious information on the weapons and implements of the group he called the 'mallan-para blacks'. He described how they painted

their wooden shields and woven-cane baskets, adding that the designs were purely decorative and had 'no meaning'. He explained that bicornual baskets were 'made by men only, but used more by the women' and that cannibalism was rife, although people were seldom killed with the intention of eating them (Roth, 1900: 17, 70, 87). Yet, apart from his identification of the area as the lower Tully River valley and occasional mentions of distinctive fauna such as cassowaries, he gave no indication that the people he described lived in a predominantly rainforest environment. Roth clearly expressed an appreciation of the fact that different Aboriginal groups had different material cultures, different practices, rituals and so forth; yet he shied away from linking these differences to the environments in which they lived.

Unlike an ethnography today, in which the focus is on a people first and foremost, on socio-cultural context, a group's social organization, culture, cosmology and their human 'being' (Austin-Broos, 1999), Roth's ethnographic bulletins focus on 'types' of objects, implements, practices and so forth. From his descriptions emerge very piecemeal, one-dimensional delineations of Aboriginal people as social beings. They give only staccato glimpses of parts of the life of a people, not rounded depictions of them as living, breathing human beings with motivations, desires and interests. The lacunae are in no small measure related to what Roth was trying to achieve as collector-anthropologist while engaged in a demanding, full-time job as Protector. They also relate to the manner in which he interacted with Aboriginal people, the intermittent bursts of time spent in their company and the conventions and orientations of anthropology at the time. On the last of these, Austin-Broos (1999: 211) has remarked on the contemporary tendency to sequester data from theory, noting that 'ironically, it is possible that one of the reasons that Gillen's and Spencer's data have often proved so useful to others (including Durkheim) is that they lack the interpretation that would make them an integrated portrait of a way of being'. When we consider the piecemeal yet useful data collected and catalogued by Roth, we can see that this is an

even more remote possibility for him. As Fuary (2004a) has argued, Aboriginal people cannot emerge from his bulletins as anything other than producers of material objects and discrete practices. They are, in effect, produced by him as producers, and as products themselves of their cultures.

Roth's ethnographies are remarkably lacking in overt theorising. Even the narrative of evolutionary progress, which informed Spencer and Gillen's and most other contemporary ethnographies as well as material culture studies, most famously in the case of Augustus Pitt-Rivers, is seldom apparent in Roth's studies. Only occasionally it peeks through. In Bulletin No. 16: Huts and Shelters, Roth made occasional remarks suggesting a progressive sequence of building structures, with the 'breakwind' at the primitive (in the sense of temporally prior as well as structurally more basic) extreme and the ridge-pole hut at the 'most advanced' end (Roth, 1910: 55, 58). Even here, however, the imputations of progressive sequence are mere casual remarks and the bulletin as a whole is consumed with Roth's characteristic preoccupations with what Aboriginal people made, how they made it and what they did with it. Throughout the bulletins, the paramount organising principle is the type of material object, with discussion and illustration deployed so as to maximise description and minimise theoretical or interpretative commentary.

Among anthropologists at the time, theoretical nescience could be positively valued. Perhaps the best-known instance is Baldwin Spencer's statement that he sent Gillen 'endless questions and things to find out, and by mutual agreement he reads no one else's work so as to keep him unprejudiced in the way of theories' (quoted in Mulvaney & Calaby, 1985: 172). Regardless of the empirical accuracy of the claim, Spencer's assumption was that information collected by his Central Australian collaborator was of superior quality because it was theoretically untainted. Roth lacked the luxury of a (supposedly theoretically naive) collaborator, but he acted as his own theoretical censor in his ethnographic studies, perhaps in the belief that this would enhance the value and veracity of his observations. The theoretical innocence of his studies cannot be attributed to ignorance of theory.

He studied evolutionary biology at Oxford, and in correspondence with Spencer he sometimes referred to theoretical issues in anthropology and to Pitt-Rivers' principles of museum display.⁷ In publications, however, he adopted a rigorously objective-scientific stance, minimising speculation and generalisation while maximising detachment and description. He took those qualities to an extreme, much further than Spencer.

In his major books, Spencer kept theory at arm's length, generally sequestering overt theorising into prefaces and introductions while the main body of the texts recounted in detail the observed mode of living of Aboriginal people.⁸ Roth did not allow theory to intrude even this far. Sometimes he used the prefaces to his ethnographic bulletins to indicate how the data therein may relate to the work of others, but such explanations did not engage with the theoretical issues of the day such as evolutionism or diffusionism. More usually, he used his prefaces to explain why the data were organised around that bulletin's theme, a topic on which he could become defensive, as in the preface to Bulletin No. 7: Domestic Implements, Arts, and Manufactures, where he wrote:

Fault will probably be found with the inclusion in the present Bulletin of certain implements used for fighting and hunting purposes: similarity of origin and workmanship are my excuses in the former case, while omission from a previous Bulletin (no. 3 – Food, its Search, Capture, and Preparation) is all that I can plead in the latter.

I regret the irregular sequence in which the separate branches of the subject have been treated: workers in the Field of Primitive Culture will, however, appreciate the difficulties attendant upon any attempts at obtaining logical order. (Roth, 1904)

The final words were crucial, for Roth saw it as his responsibility to impose logic and order, as best he could, on a cache of disorderly and slippery material culture. That is what drove his typological imperative to collect, collate and categorise.

ROTH THE PROTECTOR

The imposition of order was also the imperative behind Roth's actions as Northern Protector and Chief Protector of Aboriginals. These positions had been created to administer the 1897 *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*, which was a governmental response to revelations of shocking levels of exploitation and abuse of Aboriginal people, especially in the north of the colony. Consequently, Roth was a key figure in Queensland's governance of its Aboriginal people at the crucial time when the colony made the transition from older, more *laissez faire* methods toward more modern and intrusive modes of regulating inter-ethnic relations. In the protective regime thus established, the hand of the state fell heaviest on Aboriginal people, who were reduced to the status of wards and treated as incompetents, but the government also restricted and regulated, to a far greater extent than ever before, the actions of non-Indigenous people who had dealings with Aboriginal people. The subsequent history of the *Aboriginals Protection Act* as a tool for the oppression of Aboriginal people has tended to obscure the fact that in its early years it was experienced very much as an imposition upon white and other non-Indigenous people, who could no longer deal with Aboriginal people as they pleased (Ganter & Kidd, 1993; Kidd, 1997: 36-79; Whitehall 2002). Those impositions upon white men in the hitherto largely unregulated frontier regions of North Queensland inspired the resentment that led to Roth's undoing.

While Roth sought to impose order on both black and white, he treated the two parties quite differently, depicting the faults of Aboriginal people as due primarily to incompetence whereas the failings of non-Indigenous people were represented more as the outcomes of immorality. Dealing first with the former, his attribution of incompetence to Aboriginal people – particularly their supposed inability to adapt to the European presence – was certainly not unusual at the time. It was a standard, almost universal, assumption among turn-of-the-

twentieth-century Europeans (McGregor, 2011: xvii-xxv). However, Roth's adherence to this assumption warrants comment since in his ethnographic work he was at pains to demonstrate the ingenuity of Aboriginal people, their devising of intricate technologies and possession of complex languages. As Kate Khan (2008a: 171) has observed, Roth's ethnographic writings were, among other things, attempts to foster among settler Australians a more positive image of Aboriginal people. Yet when it came to the governance of Aboriginal people he emphasised their ineptitudes. In a letter to Baldwin Spencer in 1903 he wrote:

I quite agree with you in your views about teaching the aboriginals too much:- views endorsed by the northern missionaries themselves; indeed glancing at my reports you will see that they are really reformatory and industrial schools. I quite agree with you as to the pauperising, pampering and over-'education' to which the blacks have been subjected in other states.⁹

His statement accords with Ganter's and Kidd's assessments that the 1897 Act, as originally implemented and administered, was not so much a radical new attempt at social engineering as an extension, into the Aboriginal domain, of existing welfare measures for the care of those deemed unable to look after themselves (Ganter & Kidd, 1993; Kidd, 1997: 36-79).

In line with the presumption of Aboriginal ineptitude, Roth endorsed the then-prevalent assumption that the Aboriginal race was doomed to extinction. He informed Baldwin Spencer that he based his administrative practice on the following four points:

- (a) in the struggle for existence, the black cannot compete with the white
- (b) it is not desirable that he should mix with the white
- (c) with advancing civilisation, the black will die out
- (d) while he lives, the black should be protected from the abuses to which he is subjected by the white.¹⁰

By his own account, then, Roth's severe and exacting administration of the 1897 Act was a gigantic exercise in smoothing the pillow of a dying race. The same could be said of a great deal of protectionist administration and legislation. Roth, however, was unusual, not in believing that the Aboriginal race would soon die out but in seldom saying so. Perhaps this was another instance of his reluctance to speculate or generalise. The statement quoted above is from his private correspondence, and we have been unable to find a single published statement by Roth unequivocally endorsing the doomed race idea (although there are few gesturing vaguely in that direction). Other scientists and administrators at the time showed no such reticence (McGregor, 1993, 1997).

While Roth was reticent about projecting an Aboriginal future, his official reports reveal him as a man confident in the exercise of authority and in the rightness of his own judgements. He wrote with absolute assurance on his own decisions to grant or refuse Aboriginal women permission to marry, to send Aboriginal and 'half-caste' children to missions and reformatories, and on the numerous other interferences his position obliged him to carry out. Unlike his counterpart, Archibald Meston, Southern Protector of Aborigines from 1898 to 1903, Roth was a consummate bureaucrat and apparently valued by Queensland political figures for that fact. Indeed Roth and Meston, the first two senior protectors of Aborigines in Queensland,¹¹ were extraordinarily ill-matched, the former being an urbane scientist-bureaucrat, the latter a largely self-educated journalist and raconteur who showed neither aptitude for, nor interest in, official paperwork (Ganter & Kidd, 1993; Holland, 2013: 35-53). They frequently clashed, which may have been a factor behind the end of both men's careers as Protectors. For Roth, however, the major factor behind his leaving the position was the antagonism he stirred up among powerful interest groups in North Queensland.

When Roth first took the position of Northern Protector in 1898, he had widespread support from the North Queensland settler community. That did not last long. Within two years his rigorous

enforcement of the protective aspects of the 1897 Act had antagonised numerous pastoralists, pearlers and other employers of Aboriginal labour as well as many others who were accustomed to the colonial convention of having 'a free hand with the blacks' (Loos, 1982). Their attempts to evade the new controls over their interactions with Aboriginal people inspired Roth to intensify governmental powers, one outcome of which was an *Amendment Act* of 1901 which tightened government regulations over employment and sexual relations (Kidd, 1997: 51-53; Roth, 1902: 1149). So the antagonisms escalated, and his opponents sought opportunities to undermine the Protector. They had some highly placed allies, including the member for Cooktown in the Legislative Assembly, John Hamilton.

Roth's growing band of enemies did not have to search hard to find the Protector's points of vulnerability. One was his ill-advised foray into what he had termed, with spectacular insensitivity, 'ethno-pornography': essentially an anthropological inquiry into 'primitive' sexuality (Roth, 1897: 169-184). Among other things, it involved photographs of an Aboriginal couple engaged in sexual intercourse, which Roth took to prove a point about the procreative potency of the subincised penis. In 1904 John Hamilton publicised the fact that Roth had taken these photographs, insinuating that they were the product of a depraved and lascivious mind. Roth's own correspondence on the matter suggests that he was astounded that anyone could misinterpret his purely scientific inquiries as prurient indulgences in sexual sensationalism and perplexed by the furore that erupted once the existence of the photographs was made public (Richards, 2010: 168-176). But he had gifted his enemies with a deadly weapon. An article in the *New Endeavour Beacon*, a Cooktown newspaper hostile to Roth, fulminated:

The bawdy photographs ... taken 'in the interests of science' [would] disgrace a common Port Said exhibition – and Port Said photos are ... the dirtiest filth on earth. There is not much Aboriginal protection in depicting filthy and degrading as well as unnatural scenes. (quoted in Richards, 2010: 175)

Those whom Roth had accused of exploiting the 'flesh and blood' of Aboriginal people could point to his flagrant exploitation of their bodies, and to Roth's own defilement of Aboriginal sexuality into filthy pictures more degrading than any act of lustful frontiersmen (McGrath, 2008).

Also giving ammunition to his enemies, in 1905 – that is, while he was Queensland's Chief Protector of Aboriginals and shortly after the 'ethno-pornography' controversy came to a crescendo – he sold a huge ethnographic collection to the Australian Museum in Sydney for £450. As indicated earlier in this paper, a large proportion – probably the majority – of this material must have been collected while Roth was Northern Protector and his legal right to dispose of it in this manner was extremely doubtful. In his annual reports he had referred to ethnographic collecting as part of his official duties, and in his report for 1899 he stated that his 'anthropological and ethnological collections ... are now to be considered the property of the nation' (quoted in Khan, 2008b: 187). For his many Queensland critics, the fact that Roth donated only about 300 items to the Queensland Museum, whereas he sold over 2,000 to a southern institution for private gain, was proof of his perfidy. Again, those who resented Roth's punctilious performance of his duties as Protector smelled blood.

The scandal-mongering *Truth* newspaper launched a series of attacks culminating in an article published on 8 April 1906, which stated:

When Dr. Roth was appointed Protector there was a clear understanding between himself and the Government that all curios, weapons, and aboriginal specimens, collected by him during his period of office, were to be the property of the State. That understanding was made secure by an agreement which is still in existence, and available when required. There was no ambiguity in the business, and it was referred to on, at least, two occasions by the Minister when passing the Estimates. It was also publicly acknowledged by Roth when being examined before the bar of the Legislative Council in 1901. (Anon, 1906a)

A week later, *Truth* published a three-page spread itemising each of the 2000 artefacts and 240 plates he sold to the Australian Museum, prefaced by a lengthy exposition of the shortcomings and moral lapses of Walter Roth. The Protector, according to *Truth*, was guilty of grossly unethical conduct by selling, for private gain, a collection that was rightfully the property of the state (Anon, 1906b).

It is unclear why Roth sold his collection to the Australian Museum (Henry et al., 2013: 33-34). That he chose to lodge his collection there rather than in Brisbane is not surprising. The Queensland Museum at the time was in a parlous state, with no director between 1905 and 1910, reduced staff and poor storage facilities, whereas the Australian Museum was well positioned to care for a major collection of artefacts. Roth enjoyed good relations with senior staff of the latter institution, including its curator, Robert Etheridge, who was about to set up a separate Department of Ethnology within the museum (Robins, 2008: 178). Yet while the superior scientific credentials of the Sydney institution might explain why Roth chose it over the Queensland Museum, it does not explain why he sold, rather than donated, the items. Roth's collecting and his associated ethnographic studies appear to have been motivated by dedication to science rather than desire for material gain. And, considering that he was already entangled in controversies over his allegedly 'filthy' pictures and his enforcement of the provisions of the Protection Act, he may be expected to have avoided acts that would inevitably add to the controversy. Perhaps he was naive about matters such as social reputation; some of his utterances on the 'ethno-pornography' controversy point in this direction. Perhaps he had already decided to leave the Chief Protectorship. In any case, he submitted his resignation (for the second time) in May 1906 and soon afterward sailed to British Guyana to take up a position as Magistrate and District Commissioner. There he resumed his career as an ethnographic collector and recorder.

CONCLUSION

Roth's expertise as an ethnographer and collector helped secure his appointment as Northern Protector of Aboriginals in 1898. Eight years later, his ethnographic inquiries and collections furnished his many enemies with the weapons they needed to terminate his career in Aboriginal administration. His assumption of personal proprietorship over ethnographic artefacts collected in the course of his official duties, together with his incautious inquiries into Aboriginal sexuality, indicate serious misjudgement on Roth's part. Yet as an ethnographic observer and collector, his work was extraordinary for its level of detail and precision of empirical evidence. He carried out his ethnographic work with the same rigour and determination that is evident in his actions as an Aboriginal Protector, and with the same dedication to imposing order and regulation upon an unruly world.

While Roth's work alone cannot possibly allow us to adequately understand just who the Aboriginal people of North Queensland were or how their societies operated, it can, together with subsequent, more detailed and engaged ethnography, archival research, history and archaeology, allow us to fill in many of the blanks. Without Roth's anthropology, the gaps in our knowledge of North Queensland Aboriginal people, including those of the rainforests, would be far wider. As it stands, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples from the rainforest regions, we can use this material fruitfully, drawing upon the knowledge of living descendants and related others, to flesh out or even correct Roth's reports and bulletins. In so doing, it is hoped that a fuller view of the traditional owners of the Wet Tropics of North Queensland and their societies will emerge.

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❏ ENDNOTES

1. Roth to Spencer, 10 May 1898, copy of letter held by Australian Museum, Sydney; original in Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
2. S. Sinclair, Secretary, Australian Museum, to Roth, 13 March 1905, Australian Museum Archives, AMS 6, 204/1905.
3. Dr Roth's Monthly Progress Report, December 1903, Queensland Museum Correspondence Files; Queensland Museum, Old Donor and Purchase Registers: D10422, 1900; D11827, 1903; D12083, 1903.
4. Roth to Spencer, 19 January 1898, copy of letter held by Australian Museum, Sydney; original in Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
5. Roth to de Vis, 15 April 1900, Queensland Museum Correspondence Folders, Anthropology Laboratory.
6. Roth to Curator, Queensland Museum, 30 September 1897, and Roth to Curator, Queensland Museum, 4 October 1897, both in Queensland Museum, Australian Anthropology Archive Series. As this exchange indicates, Roth collected skeletal material as well as artefacts. Here, however, we focus on his collection of artefactual objects, which comprise by far the largest proportion of his collections.
7. See for example Roth to Spencer, 10 May 1898, copy of letter held by Australian Museum, Sydney; original in Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
8. See for example Spencer & Gillen, 1899, 1904; Spencer, 1914. Spencer tended to be more theoretically explicit in his journal articles and conference addresses.
9. Roth to Spencer, 8 February 1903, copy of letter held by Australian Museum, Sydney; original in Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
10. Roth to Spencer, 6 October 1902, copy of letter held by Australian Museum, Sydney; original in Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
11. From 1898 to 1904 William Parry-Okeden was their superior officer as Chief Protector, but this was an *ex officio* role consequent upon his position as Commissioner of Police. Parry-Okeden had very little involvement in administering Aboriginal affairs.

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