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furthering the appreciation and  
understanding of Oceanic art

## No End to the Splendid Diversity of Oceanic Art

However much Oceanic art one sees it will never be the case that there is not something new to discover. The vast array of Oceanic art that has graced this journal's pages is testament to the splendid diversity of the field. That, in turn, is reflective of the huge range of peoples and cultures that reside in the southern Pacific region. Just one example of this are the slit gong drums of the Sepik-Ramu area in northern PNG. Barry Craig's survey of these drums in this edition of the Journal, merely a summary of a much larger paper available on the OAS website, shows just how much variation there is in one specific art form across a fairly limited geographical area. When that diversity is put in the context of the thousands of different language groups and cultures of Oceania, and the wide array of objects that we now define as 'art', it becomes evident that the range is almost infinite. And if we add into that equation the fact that few outsiders will ever come to grasp the deeper meaning of designs and motifs of individual objects we come again to the unknowability of so much Oceanic art. Perhaps this is where the fascination lies with people drawn to these myriad artforms: despite all the mystery they tell a story and exude a message that resonates with some in a deeply satisfying manner.

Some of those resonations were felt on Oxford Street, Paddington on July

23 at the OAS Tribal Art Fair -- the most successful yet. Once again a large contingent of members and other interested parties gathered at what has become an institution for Oceanic art collectors. Such was the level of interest and enthusiasm (and quality of inventory) that visiting collector and OAS guest lecturer, Mark Blackburn, predicted that the event will become the 'Parcours of the Pacific.' Let's hope so! Congratulations to those hard working OAS committee members who made it all happen.

Mr. Blackburn was in Sydney to give his well received lecture on the intricacies of collecting Polynesian art at the Australian Museum on July 20. Once again members were provided with the opportunity to hear from an internationally respected authority on one specific aspect of that splendid diversity that we all so celebrate. The next keenly anticipated speaker, Dr. Jude Philp, will deliver her talk on the Macleay Museum's Pacific Collections, at the Macleay on Wednesday, September 14.

In this edition of the OAS Journal we also have a review of Harold Gallasch's and Neil McLeod's beautiful book on the stunning La Sisi canoe that they commissioned from master craftsmen in New Ireland that is currently residing in the South Australian Museum. It is a lovely story of one object that brought together hundreds of people



'Kong'gunov'whei', Kanganaman, Central Iatmul, carved early 20th C.; gazetted NCP 30.11.1967. Photo: B. Craig. More details on pages 6 - 8.

in a celebration of their culture and a reminder that the Malangan tradition lives on today. We also present the first part of an interview with the Director of the National Museum and Art Gallery of PNG, Dr. Andrew Moutu, and learn a little of his fascinating journey from a New Guinea village into academia and on to one of the most important cultural institutions in the Pacific. More to follow.

Jim Elmslie

## dates for your diary

**Wednesday 14 September 2016 – OAS Lecture Centuries 19 to 21. The Macleay Museum's Pacific collections** A public lecture by Dr Jude Philp in association with the Oceanic Art Society. 6:30 - 9pm Macleay Museum, Sydney University. Details page 2.

**Saturday 12 November 2016 – OAS AGM and Lecture** Crispin Howarth - *Meeting the Fellows Collection* and more. 10am - 12:30pm - Australian Museum, followed by a luncheon, details to be advised.

**Wednesday 8 March 2017** – Venue and speaker to be advised.

**Wednesday 17 May 2017** – Speaker to be advised. 6pm to 8:30pm, The Centenary Auditorium, Art Gallery of NSW.

**Wednesday 19 July 2017** – Venue and speaker to be advised.

**Saturday 22 July 2017** – Sydney Tribal Art Fair. Venue to be advised.

**Wednesday 20 September 2017** – Speaker to be advised. 6pm to 8:30pm, Art Gallery of NSW.

**NEXT LECTURE**

A different venue for OAS this time... On Wednesday 14 September OAS members have been invited to attend the Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, for an evening lecture by Dr Jude Philp, Senior Curator, who advises:

In November the Macleay Museum will close as we prepare to move to the next chapter in our history as the Macleay Collections within the Chau Chak Wing Museum. Opening late 2018, the Chau Chak Wing Museum will physically unite the Macleay Collections with the Nicholson Collections and the University Art Collections in a purpose-built facility that includes storage, teaching and research spaces as well as extensive public galleries. This means that the collections relating to our Oceanic region will be available in ways that have never been possible before.

**OUR EVENT - Wednesday 14 September, 6pm - Macleay Museum, Macleay Building A12, University of Sydney. Cost: Free. Please note that there will be NO refreshments provided at this event, but there are plenty of excellent cafes and restaurants close at hand in Glebe Point Road. Please advise your attendance, so that a seat will be provided for you, by email to: [secretary@oceanicartsociety.org.au](mailto:secretary@oceanicartsociety.org.au) or by telephone: 02 9332 3984.**

**Public lecture by Dr Jude Philp in association with the Oceanic Art Society:**

## Centuries 19 to 21. The Macleay Museum's Pacific collections

At what date the Macleay family started collecting objects made by peoples from the Pacific islands is not known. But living in Sydney from the 1830s certainly gave them opportunity and a position in society to do so. Entomological specimens, crabs, sponges and a huge variety of zoological and faunal material came to them as gifts from naturalists and officers of the many ships coming into Sydney during the 19th century. We do know that William John Macleay – the last in our line of Macleay collectors – acquired Pacific Islander things from ships in Sydney, purchased at times items from shops and personally traded for objects during the Chevert Expedition (1875). This material of the 19th century was gifted to the University when it became formalized as the Macleay Museum in 1892.

In the 20th and 21st centuries the Pacific collection grew through the work of the University's researchers in anthropology, education and geography, and through the donations of administrative officers and war veterans working in the region, and by the donations of collectors. In this illustrated talk,

Jude will touch on the various ways the Macleay's Pacific collection came into being from centuries 19 through to the 21st.

Jude Philp is Senior Curator of the Macleay Museum at The University of Sydney. Her work includes overseeing the curatorial work on the museum's collections, researching and writing exhibitions, giving gallery talks and working with researchers investigating the collections. She is currently working on the Macleay's forthcoming exhibitions within the Chau Chak Wing Museum (due to open in 2018), and a joint project with Victorian, NSW and Qld State Museums on Sir William MacGregor's collection of PNG heritage made between 1888-1898. Jude studied anthropology at Sydney and Cambridge Universities and undertook her doctorate on museum collections and Torres Strait Islanders' philosophy of history.

Jude Philp  
Senior Curator, Macleay Museum  
Sydney University Museums



*Canoe prow detail, Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands. Unknown collector. Image courtesy Michael Myers.*



(Above) Canoe and wharf, Rennell Island. Photographed 1927 by Ian Hogbin. Image courtesy Michael Myers.



(Right) Kina from Enga Province, collected by Senta Taft and gifted to the Macleay Museum. Image courtesy Michael Myers.

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## Mark Blackburn on Understanding Polynesian Art

Lecture to Oceanic Art Society, Sydney, 20 June 2016. Report by Robin Hodgson

On Monday 20 June 2016, in the Annexe of the Australian Museum, our visiting lecturer, Mark Blackburn from Hawaii, gave us a fast-paced look at his life as an exuberant explorer, enterprising protector and dedicated exponent of ancient and modern Polynesian art and culture. The event attracted interstate members and a number of Tongan language students living in Sydney.

Mark began by acknowledging people of note who have encouraged, mentored and befriended him along his journey, including Donald Stanley Marshall, Bengt Danielsson, Thor Heyerdahl, Roger Neich, Adrienne Kaepler, David Simmons, Terence Barrow, Georgia Lee and Jo Ann Van Tilburg.

He described the state of the market for Polynesian artefacts as being disturbed, with major auction houses acting as the transactional pathway between these objects and the current plutocracy. The average collector is distanced by the unrealistically high prices attached to trophy objects. \$1.4 million was paid recently for a rare Rurutu chief's stool, although an object of extremely high quality and a masterpiece, does it warrant such a high price for a piece of Polynesian furniture? Another example cited was an Hawaiian calabash or bowl worth \$7,000 or so, which sold for \$85,000 – it was a lovely shape – to the late Sheikh Saud bin Mohammed Al-Thani. The new



Calabash - photo courtesy Mark Blackburn.

exaggerated and speculative prices have left the majority of collectors and dealers priced out of the market.

He next discussed how Polynesian wooden artefacts are often dated to the 18th century at the earliest, yet they go back to at least the 16th century, as is shown by the recent wood testing of the famous A'a god figure at the British Museum. It shows a date of 16th century or before. Interestingly this figure, given by Rurutu islanders to the London Missionary Society in the 1820s, is carved from sandalwood, which is not native to Rurutu.

Mark talked about two of the major market disrupters of the last couple decades. The first was the late Sheikh Saud bin Mohammed Al-Thani who had an amazing eye, but was inconsistent in paying for his purchases. He once acquired an entire auction of ancient Greek coins and never paid for it. He would spend hundreds of millions of dollars in different areas, "acting like a giant sucking machine" in the market place. The second was Bill Ziff, an American publishing mogul who had a great eye, always paid, and was active in many areas of collecting. He formed the most important Pre-Columbian collection in the world.

Mark then discussed manufactured or "trade" artefacts made for the purpose of selling to early voyagers and visitors, including both Captain Cook and the

Bloxam brothers, who sailed on the voyage of the H.M.S. Blonde to Hawaii in 1826. Objects that may have been made for trade such as the Marquesan



Amulet - photo courtesy Mark Blackburn.



Adze blade pendant- photo courtesy Mark Blackburn.

# lecture report

figure, which recently sold at auction in France for €85,000 (once owned by Bill Ziff), lacked any wear or a suspension hole. He also pointed out that the Ziff figure may have even been just a curio made in the 1920s and sold by the Spitz Curio store in Papeete, Tahiti as were many objects encountered in the market place from the Marquesas.

Other examples were Hawaiian bowls, traditionally very important family heirlooms. One showed a manufactured Cook's voyage Leverian Museum provenance that exhibits "butterfly" repairs, which did not exist in Hawaii prior to 1820. He then showed an 18th century bowl purchased in 1986 at Christie's that had been misidentified as an English milk bowl.

Mark then discussed the *hei tiki* of New Zealand, made of *pounamu* or greenstone (Maori jade is harder than iron), and is usually worn as a pendant

around the neck. These *tikis* date back to the 14th and 15th centuries (see photos). The darker green *tiki* was purchased recently from an OAS member dealer. The large green *tiki* was purchased as an investment by the British Railway Fund and resold many times. A similar example collected in 1795 by Matthew Flinders is now housed in the Auckland Museum.

The *tiki* made from inanga stone or "white bait" jade, has red sealing wax instead of *paua* shell for the eyes, and was owned by the famous artist and collector Sir Jacob Epstein. Following was a spectacular venerated adze *pounamu* pendant, the green and white mottled stone named after a type of pigeon found on the South Island.

Mark Blackburn was an adventurer from an early age. He built a replica of Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon Tiki* raft in his backyard before he was 10 years old. In December 2015, he helped organize the official Explorers Club flag expedition #53 – "an ethnographic survey of the Lau Islands" – with fellow explorers Ed Roski, Peter Keller of the Bowers Museum, and Leslie Martin. There are 60 islands in the Lau group with approximately 10,000 inhabitants. They brought *kava* as gifts for the various island chiefs on each island. One stop was Mago Island owned by Mel Gibson, bought from the Japanese for \$15 million and made fully self-sustainable – with farming, logging



Two hei tikis - photos courtesy Mark Blackburn.

and oysters. They were shown a box of Lapita pottery pieces found there.

At Lakemba Island, the explorers presented *kava* to the chief (See photo) and were very impressed by his large *kava* bowl – which, Mark bemoaned, was not for sale. They discussed with the chief the climate crisis of the

islands affecting their coastlines, also the dead reefs being the result of bleaching and the use of dynamite in fishing. They visited Kabara Island, where most *kava* bowls and tapa cloth are made and where the langi stone platform remains are still mostly intact. The last island had an important sacred cave connected to many Fijian and Tongan myths. *Tabua*, large whales teeth, used as high prestige items, were visible everywhere in the chief's houses. There are many Lapita sites on the islands that, Mark feels, would merit further anthropological and archaeological study.



L - R seated: Ed Roski, Lakemba Island Chief, Mark Blackburn and Peter Bowers. Photo courtesy Mark Blackburn.

Mark was executive producer in the first feature Chinese film shot in Hawaii. His new company, Hawaii Film Challenge, is now calling for scripts from around the world for a film competition scheduled for September 2017, which will include indigenous story-telling with ten teams being selected and brought to Hawaii with all expenses paid.

In closing, Mark touched on the mismanagement problems of Hawaii's Bishop Museum, which houses a large collection of Hawaiian artefacts, royal family heirlooms, documents and old photographs. He is outspoken against its poor current structure, which resulted in the once-in-a-lifetime Hawaiian feather-work show, *Na Hulu Ali'i*, being cancelled in favour of a pop culture show on candy - at a time when diabetes is rampant among Pacific Island peoples. Mark hopes for a better (perhaps an OAS) CEO to take charge.

Lastly Mark handed out cards introducing ATADA – an *International Organization Honoring the Artistic Vision of Indigenous People* - composed of dealers and collectors worldwide, featuring an online market-place, a calendar of international tribal art exhibitions and events, and discussions on legal aspects like theft (including the 2003 theft of prehistory stone objects from the PNG National Museum), fakes and copies. Although ATADA is based in America, the principles are universal and the excellent website is definitely worth perusing. See it all online at: [www.atada.com/](http://www.atada.com/)

# Slit Gongs of the Sepik and Madang Provinces

By Barry Craig, South Australian Museum

I have prepared a paper from a dataset of a large number of slit gongs of the Sepik and lower Ramu region, documented during field surveys in 1981, 1982 and 1983, to demonstrate slit gong variations and their repertoire of sculptural form.

That paper has too many images to be suitable for publication in a journal. It will therefore be available on the Oceanic Art Society website soon. In this notice, I provide a much-abbreviated version.

The slit gongs (slit drums, *garamuts*) of the Torricelli Mountains (Fig. 1) are symmetrically canoe-shaped, carved so that prow and stern look alike, and the slit is in the form of a double keyhole.

The slit gongs of the upper Sepik region (upstream from Ambunti) have a truncated stern and a long tapering prow carved with an animal, human or sometimes non-figural finial. 'Wobnerluk' from the Wogamusin village of Washkuk is an example (Fig. 2). It was purchased



Figure 1. Slit gong at Raut, Gnau speakers, near Anguganak, Torricelli Mountains, 2002. Image courtesy Barry Craig.

by a Mission priest in 1972, gazetted National Cultural Property 30th March 1976 and has been kept at the Catholic Mission in Wewak. It has good provenance documented by that priest and ought to be in the PNG National Museum.

There is a marked change in the form of slit gongs at the villages of the Manambu on the Sepik River in the immediate vicinity of Ambunti. Historical photographs show prows carved as crocodile heads and truncated sterns (D. Newton *Crocodile and Cassowary*, 1971, Figs 123, 124). These are closely related to Western Iatmul slit gongs (Fig. 3). Prows are carved as animals, birds and in human form.

The Sawos, located inland north of the Sepik River Iatmul, carve slit gongs with a pug-nosed prow featuring large nostrils and prominent disc eyes (Fig. 4). Many have a human head at the stern, usually representing a male ancestor. The prow is called *kami* (catfish) or *kaula* (carp or gudgeon) – '*bikmaus*' in Tok Pisin.

Slit gong prows of Chambri Lakes, central and eastern Iatmul, and the Karawari and Yuat rivers, are carved as monster-like combinations of the attributes of dangerous animals, such as crocodile or snake heads



Figure 2. 'Wobnerluk' at the Catholic Mission, Wewak. Carved by Kumapui several generations before descendant Tirue, who was c.40 years old in 1972. Left: 1981; right: 2002. Note deterioration. Photos: B. Craig.



Figure 3. West Iatmul slit gong 'Mandangu', Yentschanmangua, 1981. Gazetted NCP 23 December 1971. Carved 19th C. at Yabalagwi, an older village site downriver. 1981. Photo: B. Craig.

with rows of multiple boars' tusks, and doubled faces; the stern carvings may be of ancestors or totem animals (Fig. 5). Keram River prows and finials are usually in human form as figures or faces.

At Bien, downstream from Angoram, the slit gongs radically change in form. They are characterised by bilateral symmetry: the finials at each end of the gong are carved the same, either as faces resembling *brag*

Historical photographs show prows carved as crocodile heads and truncated sterns



Figure 4. 'Tambalanmin' (front) and 'Wailumunagwan' (rear), both carved with steel tools c. 1900 by Morogan, Yamok, Sawos; exchanged by Tovantemi, Korogo, West Iatmul with a captured Kandinggai woman, Winjan, who was sacrificed to 'strengthen' Yamok. Prow represents wundaun (bikmaus' fish). 1981. Photo: B. Craig.



# Slit Gongs of the Sepik and Madang Provinces

Continued from page 7

masks or as *kandimboang* figures (often male at one end and female at the other), usually supported by an animal such as a lizard, which is the 'vehicle' of the spirit represented as the finial (Fig. 6). The lavishly carved sides of the gong are also

of bilateral symmetrical design, depicting several motifs that refer to spirits, or to features or creatures of the natural world. This kind of gong is carved in the lower Sepik-lower Ramu region.

Slit gongs of the north coast near Aitape are similar to those of the Lower Sepik-Ramu but with angular forms and linear, rather than curvilinear, designs on the sides. (S. Chauvet *Les Arts indigenes en Nouvelle-Guinee* 1930:79, 80).



Figure 6. Slit gong at Watam bought from Wangan c.1930 but much older than that. Finials represent brag masks. 1983. Photo: B. Craig.



Figure 5. 'Kong'gunov'whei', Kanganaman, Central Iatmul, carved early 20th C.; gazetted NCP 30.11.1967. Top: prow - wagan (mythical fish); bottom: stem - female ancestor with cicada nose. 1981. Photos: B. Craig.



Head of a rare 19th century club with an elaborately carved head, Pentecost Island, Vanuatu.

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# Tribal Art Fair Report

By Robin Hodgson

The OAS Tribal Art Fair in Sydney this year on Saturday 23 July was, according to the organisers: "A good, successful day... Probably the best presentation to date... The venue worked well."

The venue was the lovely old sandstone hall adjacent to St Matthias Church of England in Oxford Street Paddington. There were fifteen stall holders with a variety of wares (as you can see from the photos) ranging from top-end Oceanic artefacts – with dealers clamouring for early entry to get at them - to interesting handcrafts, paintings and books from a variety of Oceanic, African and Asian countries, including for the first time, a stall dedicated to Australian Aboriginal wares. Also, for the first time, a silent auction was held with stallholders providing an artefact each from which sales OAS received a percentage.

Our visiting guest lecturer on Polynesian art and culture, Mark Blackburn, stayed over especially to attend the fair and made the following comment:

"What a unexpected joy the Tribal Art Fair. Although a lot of varied material to suit every budget and collectors ambitions, I was pleasantly surprised to find several good Polynesian items that I eagerly purchased. With careful nurturing this could be the "Parcours" of the Pacific. I encourage both international collectors and dealers to exhibit and attend this exciting event. Would love to come back same time same place as I really enjoyed the fair." Mark also said that if he had known about the auction he would have brought and donated a piece to OAS!

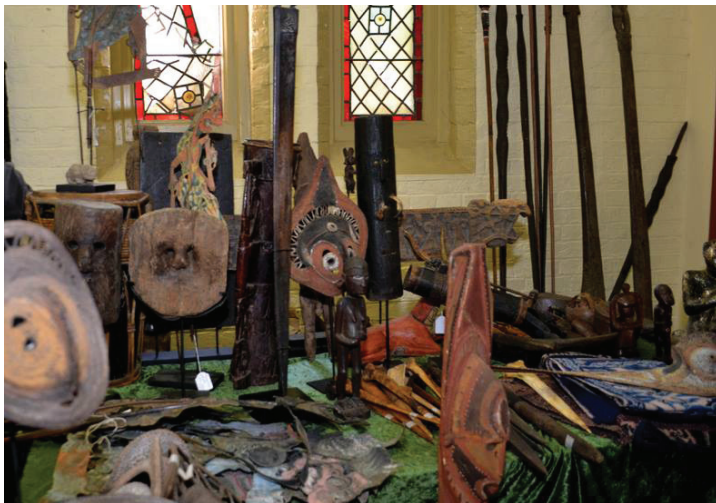
Advertising worked well, and the \$2 coin donation jar at the entrance clicked

continuously through the day. OAS had several people join our membership and even more requesting information be sent to them on future events.

The silent auction provided some very intense last minute bidding, with strong words and some ruffled feathers, and a few lessons were learned about set up and control.

Still, buoyed by the general success of the fair, OAS is planning bigger and better things for the years ahead. We may need to find a larger venue. We will keep you posted. Next year's fair will either be known as the *Sydney Tribal Art Fair*, or the *Sydney Oceanic Art Fair*. Let us know your preference there.

For more photos please see our Facebook page.



## La-Sisi – Malangan Canoe

By Harold Gallasch and Neil McLeod. Melbourne Publishing Group, 2012.  
60 pages with colour illustrations. Review by Jim Elmslie

This lavishly illustrated book by OAS members, Harold Gallasch and Neil McLeod tells the story of one exceptional work of Oceanic art – the spectacular La-Sisi canoe. This fine piece will be familiar to many Australian based members as it takes pride of place in the extensive collection of New Ireland Malangan art that is on display at the Pacific Cultures Gallery in the South Australian Museum. The canoe literally sits atop the wonderful old display cases that contain the rest of the Malangan collection.

The book is useful because it discusses in detail the origins and processes that were undertaken to produce the eight metre long canoe with its thirteen *tangela* figures. A time line charts the project from inception up to the transfer to the SA Museum. The genesis is particularly interesting. Each traditional story, and the accompanying carving that depicts that story, is covered by a form of 'copyright' that has an individual owner. Ownership of the story is transferred by inheritance, by gift or by sale. Transference of the story is an important part of the culture and must be confirmed through specific ceremonial rituals. Since European colonialism arrived in the region in the late 19th century there has been considerable disruption to traditional culture and "the regulated transfer of stories has not proceeded down in recent generations." To counter this the New Ireland Provincial Government

"assumed guardianship" of the copyright of many Malangan stories on behalf of the respective clans so that the stories would not be lost forever. This was the case with the story of the La-Sisi canoe.

An earlier version of the canoe was collected by the German colonial administrator, Franz Boluminski, in 1903, and has been on display in the Linden Museum in Stuttgart. Gallasch and McLeod came up with their ambitious scheme to create another La-Sisi after coming across images of the earlier, smaller one. Gallasch had regularly visited in the New Ireland region from 1967 as part of an agricultural research project and with his extensive knowledge of the region and its peoples believed that such an endeavor was possible. He negotiated with the provincial government for permission to initiate the project and access to the copyright of the story (and the associated physical design). This was granted in 1994 on the condition that they follow the "complete traditional procedure in the construction of the canoe [and] provide video footage and photographs of all ceremonies to the New Ireland Tourist Bureau". Thus the entire process was meticulously recorded by Gallasch and McLeod, who has had a long and celebrated career as a photographer in Papua New Guinea and researcher in Aboriginal Australia.



Hosea Linge painting La-Sisi. Image copyright of Harold Gallasch.

The book records the making of the La-Sisi canoe, starting with a trek into the mountainous spine of New Ireland to locate, cut down and haul out the tree that would become the canoe. A special building is constructed, shielded by palm fronds from prying eyes, where skilled craftsmen under the leadership of the late Hosea Linge make the spirit vessel according to "traditional procedure". At significant stages elaborate ceremonies are held until finally the vessel is complete and a huge feast and ceremony sees the splendid result unveiled to the world. From there the La-Sisi canoe is shipped to Australia and an exhibition at Ray Hughes Gallery in Sydney before being sent on to Adelaide.

This book is a concise account of Malangan culture, particularly as it existed in 1994 and 1995, as revealed by one object. McLeod's images really do justice to the people and their evident pride and excitement in undertaking such a significant and culturally important undertaking. The reader learns much about the materials and techniques employed in the construction of the La-Sisi canoe, and the intricate designs and iconography of the thirteen figures and the canoe itself are well explained. With his light and accessible style Gallasch's text is informative and entertaining. This book would be of interest to anyone who admires Malangan art, a genre that is one of Papua New Guinea's most powerful and well known art forms.



The La-Sisi canoe in public display at Libba Village. Image copyright of Harold Gallasch.

## Andrew Moutu, Director, National Museum and Art Gallery of Papua New Guinea - Part I

Interview with Jim Elmslie, at the *NGA Myth + Magic* Exhibition, Canberra, August 7 2015

**JE** Andrew, you have come a long way from a village in Dagua, and Wewak, to Cambridge University and now on to one of the highest positions in PNG administration, Director of the National Museum and Art Gallery. How did your journey begin?

**AM** I grew up in the village, Wautogik. It's on the mountains overlooking the coast of Wewak, towards Aitape, and I grew up in a village that has been blessed with some of the early leaders of Papua New Guinea, who more or less provided an inspirational model. That was an inspiration and I sought to emulate people like Bernard Narakobi, who was involved in the writing of the constitution. Bernard Narakobi in particular was especially influential. He had a library in his house in the village, and when we grew up we had access to the library and we could read some of those books. In the late 1980's and 1990's he began to write profusely and that made us think, "What is he trying to say?" and to learn from what he was trying to say. So that provided for me one of the earliest opportunities to think about what I wanted to be in the future.

**JE** Where did you go to high school?

**AM** I went to primary school in Banak, it's in between Boiken and Dagua. I went to high school in Wewak, on an island called Kairiru.

**JE** Is the school on Kairiru for more gifted children?

**AM** It was in the 1960s and 1970s, and 1980s. Mainly the children of the elite of the Sepik go there. It was a Marist Brothers school. From there I went to Aiyura, near Kainantu, and did my matriculation grades eleven and twelve. I wanted to be an army officer and I recruited for the military, but things did not happen to my favour. I was accepted but they were communicating via radio, and I was expecting it by post. So by the time I heard about my being accepted into the military I was already admitted into the University of Papua New Guinea to do foundation year. I arrived at UPNG in Port Moresby in 1991 and I found my lectures in economics pretty boring and a little bit too cerebral. I felt that they didn't have a close enough bearing to the realities of economic reasoning, and relied too much on mathematics. I found the lectures in philosophy and psychology and anthropology and linguistics more compelling, so I decided that I would settle on doing a combined degree on philosophy and anthropology, which I did at UPNG.

At UPNG, in those days, I would say that the intellectual spirit that should blaze in a learning institution, was fading like a sunset. We were only just witnessing the last rays of that glowing intellectual culture. Basically not even the embers were there.

**JE** What do you put that down to?

**AM** Mostly complacency and that high quality people, original thinkers and academics, had left. How can we carry on that spirit of a kind of critical intellectual space that UPNG generated in the 1970's and 1980's? Anyway I went there and I studied anthropology and philosophy. I found there were two things wrong with anthropology. One was that it has become too social and uninterested in the sciences, such as biology, which is closely related to anthropology. We treated the sciences with disinterest and indifference. And two, it was not theoretically or philosophically curious. That was disenchanting and I went to study philosophy which was all about the Germans and the classical Greeks, all the while it made it seem as though philosophy was a kind of intellectual preoccupation of only certain cultures, namely the West for the most part. But philosophy didn't provide a method to investigate other people's philosophy, like the Melanesians, like the Papua New Guineans. And so what I found was that you could actually do a really good combination between philosophy and anthropology that provided you with a research method and some kind of data and other philosophical concepts. With that you could interrogate and that provides you with a reflective moment to go forward.



I couldn't find a job at the time I finished my Honours in Philosophy. I read closely a German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. I was then obsessed with the idea of death. Heidegger raised the question of ontology with a new method this time with something called phenomenology, which is about trying to study the way things are without pre-given bias. It's a very disciplined way of thinking. My interest in death got me to read Heidegger, so I wrote a thesis about death and made a comparison

about Plato's understanding of death and Heidegger's understanding of death. That was my Honours thesis. Death provides a very rich field of thinking, a rich context for you to imagine a philosophical project. So for instance, Heidegger thought that we possess within our being our death; that death itself is a possibility waiting to happen, it's like a sum that is outstanding in our lives and it has to be liquidated eventually, and when death intervenes it doesn't terminate itself but it reconciles itself in the abyss of nothingness. So basically being and nothingness become reconciled. Ultimately you look at it and find that this kind of philosophy or ontological schema is one that is orientated towards death but what you find in most Melanesian societies is the inverse: we are always returning towards the origin, whereas his philosophy is orientated towards death or negation.

To be continued in next *OAS Journal*



### Chris Boylan Oceanic Art

I am interested to buy single pieces or collections of pre-1960 Oceanic Art.

I have not had a gallery for many years, but my warehouse is accessible for visits when I am in Sydney. Please call me.

cboylan@tpg.com.au TEL +61 0405 093 577

# special pieces

## Mystery Object

By Barry Craig



This mystery object has been donated to the South Australian Museum. The donor obtained it at a bric-a-brac shop so knew nothing about its provenance.

It is 41 cm long, the handle is a heavy hardwood 5 cm diameter, the diorite stone is socketed into the handle and is not an axe head, but blunt, as for a club

or pounder. There is a bird carved at the proximal end. The binding is a weathered two-ply sennit cord.

I've circulated the image to many colleagues and no-one has been able to identify it. Please contact me if you can throw light on this interesting object: [barry.craig@samuseum.sa.gov.au](mailto:barry.craig@samuseum.sa.gov.au)

## other events

**Wollongong, NSW, Australia:**  
**University of Wollongong**  
Exhibition: *24 Boxes: Un-packing the Cochrane PNG Collection*  
Library Panizzi Room  
Now until 18 September 2016.  
Digital archive online:  
[go.uow.edu.au/24boxes](http://go.uow.edu.au/24boxes)

**Melbourne, Australia:**  
**National Gallery of Victoria**  
*Focus on Pacific Art and Culture*  
Three simultaneous contemporary exhibitions including an extensive collection display, items donated by several leading OAS members.  
Now until 11 September 2016

**London, UK:**  
**Mall Galleries**  
*Tribal Art London Show*  
The Mall, London SW1  
31 August - 4 September 2016  
<http://tribalartlondon.com/>

**Paris, France:**  
*Parcours Des Mondes*  
The world's most important fair for non-Western art  
Quartier Saint-Germain des Près  
75006 Paris, France  
6 - 11 September 2016  
[www.parcours-paris.eu](http://www.parcours-paris.eu)

**Sydney, Australia:**  
**Shapiro Gallery**  
*Maketi Ples - Art and Artisan exhibition.* Shapiro Gallery, Queen Street, Woollahra  
28 September - 9 October 2016  
Email: [paula@pacifictradeinvest.com](mailto:paula@pacifictradeinvest.com)

**Sydney, Australia:**  
**Fox Studios**  
*Pasifika Film Fest 2016*  
2 - 6 November 2016  
[Facebook.com/pasifikafest](https://www.facebook.com/pasifikafest)

**Los Angeles, USA:**  
*Bonham's Tribal Art Auction*  
6 December 2016

**San Francisco, USA:**  
*The San Francisco Tribal and Textile Art Show*  
9 - 12 February 2017

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**New Guinea Tribal Art eGuide**



by Carolyn Leigh

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OAS actively seeks articles and photographs of interest for this publication, and requests your participation.

Opinions in signed articles are those of each author and not necessarily those of the OAS, and spelling variations of some words may be found as they reflect global differences.

OAS acknowledges all Pacific artists, past and present.