



Glasgow Museums Torres Strait Islands Collection



COLLECTIONS LEVEL DESCRIPTION

Data Entry form

Title of the Collection	Torres Strait Islands, Glasgow Museums
Author(s)	Eve Haddow
Curator responsible for collection (if different from author)	Curator of World Cultures
Date Completed	26 th August 2014
<p>There are ninety-nine items from Torres Strait Islands.</p> <p>Glasgow Museums houses the largest and most significant collection from the Torres Strait Islands in Scotland.</p> <p>Ninety items were acquired from Robert Bruce, a Glasgow-born engineer who taught boat building for the London Missionary Society in the Torres Strait Islands from 1881-9. Bruce was on Mer, also known as Murray island, and on Saibai. It is from these two islands that the majority of his collection comes. There are three ceremonial masks of wood (<i>mawa</i>) from Saibai, which are dark in colour and decorated with cassowary feathers. All three are larger than typical <i>mawa</i> masks, there are no eyeholes and no visible means for holding the masks in place so it is possible they were not worn but mounted somewhere. There is another item described by Bruce as a combined mask and headdress (<i>kajeck</i>) which in fact appears to hang around the neck to form a chest and back ornament. It is made of wood decorated with red, black and white pigment, three suspended wooden discs, cassowary feathers, and smaller white feathers.</p> <p>In the collection are two unique and highly significant ceremonial posts (<i>zogo baur</i>) from Waier island (1889.67.bh.1; 1889.67.bh.2). These three metre tall wooden posts may have formed part of a shrine. Both posts are decorated with carved human faces; one has a carving of a turtle near its base while the other has a carving of a clam shell. There are two headdresses (<i>dari</i>) of cut feathers attached to woven fibre over a cane frame from Mer. From Saibai is a headdress of two rows of dog teeth on plant fibre with a central decoration of red cloth.</p> <p>There are seven charms, six of stone. There are two fishing charms from Mer as well as one for influencing rain, another for love, and one for fire. From Saibai is a dugong charm. Made of thickly plaited plant fibre is a charm from Mer said to be for causing the death of an enemy. There is a waisted wooden drum with one end in the form of a fish's head. The drum is decorated with carvings infilled with lime representing two male figures and adorned with cassowary feathers. There are two highly decorated canoe models from Saibai. There is also a full size Saibai canoe paddle. Other items in the collection include marriage ornaments, pubic shells, ear ornaments, clubs, and musical instruments.</p> <p>In addition to the 19th century items from Bruce, there is a collection of four works by contemporary Torres Strait Islander artist Alick Tipoti. In addition to 3 hand-tinted linocut prints is <i>Nudaik (skateboard)</i>, a double skateboard deck in wood which has a lasercut image</p>	

Produced as part of *Pacific Collections in Scottish Museums: Unlocking their knowledge and potential* project 2013-2014. For full information and resources visit www.nms.ac.uk/pacific

on the base that is a reproduction of Tipoti's linocut *Nudaik*.

Five ceremonial heads were repatriated to the Torres Strait Islands in 2007 and in return Glasgow Museums received a contemporary feather headdress (*dhari*) from Mer.

Have any aspects of the collection been published? Please provide bibliographic references if available.

Gathercole, P & A. Clarke (1979), *Survey of the Oceanian Collections in Museums in the United Kingdom and Ireland*. UNESCO.

Kwasnik, Elizabeth (ed.) (1994), *A Wider World: Collections of Foreign Ethnography in Scotland*. National Museums of Scotland

Lovelace, A (1992), 'The Pacific Collections at Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum', *Pacific Arts, The Journal of the Pacific Arts Association*: 19-23