



University of Aberdeen Museums Fiji Islands Collection



COLLECTIONS LEVEL DESCRIPTION

Data Entry form

Title of the Collection	Fiji collection, Aberdeen University Museums
Author(s)	Eve Haddow
Curator responsible for collection (if different from author)	Head of Museums, Library, Special Collections & Museums
Date Completed	19 th August 2014
<p>There are 217 items from Fiji</p> <p>This large collection is mainly from the 19th and early 20th centuries. 109 items were collected between 1875-85 by Arthur J L Gordon and Sir William MacGregor who were Private Secretary and Chief Medical officer respectively for Sir Arthur Gordon's first government of British Fiji.</p> <p>There are several significant pieces in the Fiji collection. The first of these is a double hook figure of whale ivory given by Ro Matanitobua to Sir William Macgregor at Namosi village on Vitu Levu in the 1880s. It is said to have been in Ro Matanitobua's family for at least seven generations. It depicts two female figures back to back and is one of few known to exist. There is also a male figure in wood.</p> <p>There are four breast plates formed of whale ivory. One is finely carved composed of small pieces lashed together in the style of canoe building (ABDUA: 63728). The other three incorporate dark pearl shell to create a design. The collection includes sixteen <i>tabua</i>, or presentation tooth, which consist of a large whale's tooth pierced at either end. Eleven of these still have their braided coconut fibre cord. The largest was presented to Sir William MacGregor in 1883 at the meeting of the council of chiefs on Kandavu Island when he was there as acting governor. Another <i>tabua</i> was presented to A J L Gordon. Several items are connected to government activity during Sir Arthur Gordon's governorship including two shell trumpets removed from a temple at Bukatia during Gordon's 'Little War' of 1876.</p> <p>There are seventeen collars of whale's teeth strung on cord including those with split teeth and others with teeth of a young sperm whale. Other body adornments include four skirts and thirteen combs.</p> <p>There are thirteen pieces of Fijian pottery. Six were collected by A J L Gordon in the 1870s, two were presented by Colonel Allardyce in 1899, and another large canoe shaped vessel is from the collection of Lord and Lady Stonehaven. The Stonehavens gave a donation between 1938-45 of material they collected in the Pacific and which Lady Stonehaven's parents had acquired. Colonel Allardyce, who was legal official and acting Governor of Fiji 1901-2, donated twenty-eight Fijian items including a large piece of ceremonial barkcloth (<i>masi</i>) measuring around 20 metres presented in 1902 on the occasion of King Edward VII's installation as supreme chief of Fiji (<i>Tui biti</i>). This is one of seven pieces of Fijian barkcloth in the collection.</p> <p>There are nine wooden bowls acquired in the late 19th century including one carved in the shape of a leba fruit on the base. Also of wood are three headrests.</p> <p>There are fifty-one wooden clubs, mainly from the 19th century, in a range of styles. Several are attributed to specific islands including Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, and Rotuma. Four are inlaid with whale ivory and there are two American Smith and Wesson rifles from Fiji which are also inlaid with whale ivory in a Fijian style. There are two large clubs of whale bone from Rotuma collected by A J L Gordon.</p>	

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The collection includes human remains. The first of these is a skull apparently of a warrior, used by one of the principal chiefs of Fiji as a drinking cup. It was collected in the early 19th century, probably by Methodist missionary Reverend David Cargill who was in Fiji 1835-40. There is a human humerus set into a branch of a tree and two human thigh bones, one of which is known to come from an individual from a coastal tribe who was taken prisoner and killed by members of a hill tribe at Bukutia, Viti Levu in 1875.

Related Archives:

The museum has two annotated volumes previously owned by A J L Gordon entitled *Letters and Notes written during the Disturbances in the Highlands (known as the Devil's Country) of Viti Levu, Fiji, 1876*. Written on spine is: *Nai Tukutuk ena vuku ni Valu mai Colo ena Viti Levu*.

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

Michie, C (1887), *Catalogue of Antiquities in the Archaeological Museum of King's College, University of Aberdeen* (Various items including: ABDUA:63338)

Reid, RW (1912), *Illustrated Catalogue of the Anthropological Museum, University of Aberdeen* (Various items including: ABDUA:4500; ABDUA:4522; ABDUA:4524; ABDUA:4572; ABDUA:63338; ABDUA:63728)

Reid, RW (1912), *Catalogue of Specimens deposited by William MacGregor in the Anthropological Museum, Marischal College, University of Aberdeen in the Anthropological Museum, University of Aberdeen, 1899-1909* (Various items including: ABDUA:4501; ABDUA:4503; ABDUA:4575; ABDUA:4576-4578; ABDUA:4582; ABDUA:4673)

Barrow, T (1956) 'Human figures in Wood and Ivory from Western Polynesia', *Man*, Vol.56, Dec., pp.165-8 (ABDUA:4651)

Larrson, K (1960) *Fijian studies, Etnologiska Studier*, Vol.25. Goteburg (ABDUA:4651)

Allen Wardwell (1967) *The Sculpture of Polynesia*, Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago (ABDUA:4651)

Musee de l'Homme (1972), *La Decouverte de la Polynesie*, Paris, Musee de l'Homme. (ABDUA:4651)

Hunt, C (1981), *Shark Tooth & Stone Blade: Pacific Island Art from the University of Aberdeen*, University of Aberdeen, (Various items including: ABDUA:4500; ABDUA: 4651; ABDUA:4654; ABDUA: 38487; ABDUA: 63365; ABDUA:63728)

Hooper, S (2006), *Pacific Encounters: Art and Divinity in Polynesia 1760-1860*, British Museum Press: London (ABDUA: 4651; ABDUA: 38487; ABDUA: 63365)

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