The Last Frontier?
Acquiring The American-Australian Scientific Expedition Ethnographic Collection
1948

The American-Australian Scientific Expedition, Oenpelli 1948, see over page for description (Mountford 1956: 755)

Sally K. May, B.A.
2000

A 30,000-word thesis submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours), in the Department of Archaeology at the Flinders University of South Australia.
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Name: Sally Kate May

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Pandamas Figures, Bunbulama and Wuluwait (Mountford 1956: 468, pl. 65C,D)

Front Cover: The American-Australian Scientific Expedition, Oenpelli 1948. Expedition members from left to right: Peter Bassett-Smith [Cine-Photographer], Reginald Hollow [Cook], David H. Johnson [Mammalogist], William Harney [Guide and Liaison Officer], Fred McCarthy [Anthropologist], Herbert G. Deignan [Ornithologist], Bessie Mountford [Honorary Secretary], Brian Billington [Medical Officer], Margaret McArthur [Nutritionist], Kelvin Hodges [Biochemist], Charles Mountford [Leader, Ethnologist, Film Director], John Bray [Cook, Honorary Entomologist], Frank Setzler [Deputy Leader, Archaeologist], Missing from photograph: Ray Specht [Botanist], Howell Walker [Photographer, NGS writer], Keith Cordon [Transport Officer], Robert Miller [Ichthyologist] (photo Howell Walker, NGS; Mountford 1949: 755).
Abstract

This is a study of the influences of Western institutions and individuals on the formation of Indigenous Australian ethnographic collections. More specifically, it is concerned with the collection strategies employed by these Western institutions and individuals during the 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition (AASEAL). The expedition involved three major base camps: Groote Eylandt, Yirrkala and Oenpelli and took place three years after the end of the Second World War. It represents the political, social and economic life, priorities and aims of the time. Following the expedition, the collection of ethnographic artefacts was distributed to ten different institutions around Australia and the United States of America.

While many researchers have viewed Indigenous Australian ethnographic collections as uncontaminated evidence of the cultures from which the material was acquired, more recently questions have been asked about the context of the materials, the outside influences on its composition and, in short, whether they are more representative of Indigenous cultures or Western cultures. An analysis of the AASEAL ethnographic collections showed trends in the biases of the Western researchers and institutions and the impact of overarching theories of human nature on colonial collecting is clearly visible in this study. Social Darwinism, colonial guilt and the Great Chain of Being all impacted upon the formation and the present composition of these collections despite all these theories having come under serious scrutiny in the preceding years.

Bark paintings, analysed as an example of the categories of artefact collected during AASEAL, have disclosed their significant impact on museums and art galleries following World War Two. Of particular consequence is the realisation that for many art galleries in Australia, these artworks were the first examples of Indigenous Australian art acquired. This emphasises the impact of these paintings and their influence on future acquisitions particularly by art galleries. Artistic artefacts were ceasing to be viewed by Western society as ethnographic artefacts that belonged in museums. These paintings assisted and perhaps instituted a move towards the Indigenous Australian art being considered for its aesthetic qualities and equal to Western art in Western minds.
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Preface

The methodologies and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ, all become significant acts which need to be considered carefully and critically before being applied (Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 39).

I wrote this Preface in order to explain some of the choices I made during the year that this study has encompassed. Of particular relevance is my justification of the methodologies employed to reach conclusions regarding the collection of Indigenous Australian artefacts by the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land (hereafter AASEAL) in 1948. This study is concerned with the collections strategies and, therefore, the methodologies employed by AASEAL members, it would seem appropriate that my methodologies as well as theirs come under some scrutiny.

I am a product of my time and of my culture just as they were and this influences my findings. The important difference in my work and their work is the changes in preconceptions brought about by the benefit of hindsight and by the advancement in archaeological method, theory and practice this critical awareness has enabled. In turn, future researchers may compare the methodologies and assumptions made in this study with those made by earlier researchers as examples of different temporal and cultural influences. Gould (in Elsner et al 1994: 2) stated that classification is a mirror of our thoughts, and changes in this classification through time act as good indicators of human perceptions. In line with this, all classifications are arbitrary and directed at a certain problem. They are only good or bad in terms of whether they are appropriate to the problem or not (Dunnell 1971). These ideas are also true for changes in methodologies, such as those that have occurred between 1948 and today.

In line with these ideas, the aspects of the AASEAL researchers’ investigations that I am analysing and commonly judging in terms of contemporary cultural beliefs could also be argued against my study. My choices for this study are as much determined by contemporary “politically correct” notions as these researchers were influenced by the cultural norms of their time. The difference between research today and research in 1948 is the overwhelming desire in today’s academic world to understand the holistic context of research and, in turn, the biases and weaknesses that surround it. As Gould (1980: 47) asserts, “there is no such thing as the final or
ultimate interpretation – only better and better approximations of past reality. So, while one cannot expect to know everything about past human behavior, one can know more than is already known”.

Though these ideas could relate to numerous aspects of my study, there is one area that would initially appear to show more continuity with the past actions of archaeologists than any other. This was the selection of 484 bark paintings collected by the AASEAL in 1948 as a focus for this study. By choosing bark paintings, attention is being drawn to one type of ethnographic artefact at the expense of the others. Considering bark paintings represent 22.6% (n = 484) of all ethnographic material collected during AASEAL, my choice of these artefacts seems to be carrying on a tradition of selecting for “artistic” and highly visual/conspicuous artefacts (see Chapter Eight). I could, therefore, no more criticise collection strategies from the 1940s for their narrow view of culture and their selection of non-representative samples than they could criticise my research for the same reasons.

Perhaps here you will come to understand the need to offer some justification for my choices. First, the decision to analyse in detail one category of artefact from AASEAL was made two months into my research. When visiting the Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. I saw the vast extent of the collections held there and realised that any records I could make of the whole collection, in reference to collection strategies, would be limited and cursory. It was always my aim in undertaking this research to move beyond general empirical descriptions of the artefacts and into some penetrating analysis of collection strategies. I could not have described all the artefacts and made penetrating remarks into collection strategies in the single year allocated to this study. I, therefore, made the decision to concentrate on one type of artefact and while still analysing the whole collection in general terms and also placing all the AASEAL objects on a database (see Appendix B), I would specifically analyse the 484 bark paintings. The bark paintings thus become a metonym for the wider AASEAL collection as well as the practices and methodologies of the members of AASEAL. In this way, the project became a feasibility study showing the possibilities of analysing a part of the whole collection in similar ways.

It may be suggested that it is not the choice of one artefact that leads to informed critique but rather how this choice was made. Why did I pick bark paintings and not stone tools, baskets, spears or some other artefact? Is my choice of bark paintings as much determined by notions about the “importance” of art as opposed to the “boring” nature of other artefacts? The answer to
this question is two-fold. First, I knew from initial investigations that 484 bark paintings were acquired during AASEAL. These bark paintings constitute the largest single artefact category collected by AASEAL. This, by any standard, is a significant collection and when considered as a single collection rather than as a fragmented entity housed in ten different institutional collections, it provides a considerable sample size from which to seek meaning. It also became clear that the collectors had acquired every bark painting from the communities visited – a complete census. This is rare.

Secondly, at the very beginning of this study it was obvious that museums and art galleries holding artefacts from AASEAL were interested in finding out more about bark paintings, perhaps more than any other artefact type. I think this desire for knowledge had a deeper meaning than simply museum staff being interested in the “artistic” artefacts. After all, there were figurines, necklaces, carved model canoes and so forth in the collections, which are also “artistic” in the broadest sense, but people were not as eager for information about these.

Bark paintings are an artefact category that is theoretically more informed than many others because they – like my study – straddle several disciplines; the insights from which act as a mutually constraining and enabling web of argumentation (Wylie 1989). I thought there must be another reason for this interest and considered that, at least in the not-so-distant past, bark paintings represented to many people a fusion of art and artefact. In the 1940s, people’s perceptions of bark paintings were living on the thin line between these two distinctions and I propose that even today museums are not always sure how to treat them. It is not my aim here to give an outline of what makes art and why bark paintings do or do not fit into this mould – though this will be discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight. Rather, the unique situation of these bark paintings beckoned for recognition and, along with the other factors such as available supervision, some existing knowledge of the area, Indigenous concern for these bark paintings, a large sample size and so forth, influenced my decision to make them the major focus of my study.

In concluding this preface, I leave with you a few ideas about how I see this project. I am drawing on the ideas of the theories in my world and my culture at the present time. These influencing factors I state this without difficulty. With all the judgments I make about the work undertaken by researchers during AASEAL, I know that my work is just as biased. No person can detach themselves from their culture and take a comprehensive, objective stand in their study of the world. As Crowther (in Pearce 1989: 39) pointed out, “archaeology recognises that today’s
observations are as much a construct of today’s context in terms of bias and belief, as they are true products of the past”. It is hoped, therefore, that this thesis, with all its cultural, social and political influences represents more than just a product of its time to be dismissed when new theories and methodologies are developed but rather a step towards Gould’s (1980: 47) “better approximation”.

1

Introduction

Objects... have lives which, though finite, can be very much longer than our own. They have the power, in some sense, to carry the past into the present by virtue of their “real” relationship to past events (Pearce 1992: 24).

The desire to better understand human behaviour through the analysis of material culture has probably formed part of human curiosity for hundreds of thousands of years, if not more. Only since the late nineteenth century; specifically since Thomsen and Woorsae (Trigger 1989) has this position become a legitimate pursuit and even science with its own practitioners. It is the aim of archaeologists to determine past human behaviour from the partial and surviving material record. Archaeology has often borrowed critically and uncritically the techniques, methodologies and theoretical underpinnings from a host of other disciplines such as geology, human geography, history, philosophy, physics and so forth (Gould 1980: 47). The archaeology that exists today is a product of this unique, idiosyncratic and often problematic amalgam. As Nicholas (1999: 1) stated, “archaeology has always been in a state of transition as it responds both to new methods and ideas and to the sociopolitical milieu of the day”. It is likely that in the prevailing postmodern climate, archaeology has a better understanding of its position in society than it has ever had before and, in turn, the clearest view of the past it has ever had.

Museums and Collecting
With increasing interest and insight into the past, perhaps better labeled as increasing self-awareness and self-interest, there has been a concomitant interest in collecting and preserving this past (Alexander, in Aagaard-Mogensen 1988: 7). Just as there has been a sustained archaeological and anthropological interest in collecting and preserving the artefacts of other cultures, so there has been an interest in the practice of collecting and preserving. It is in this spirit that my study takes as its focus the museum as an instigator of collecting and as a locus of storage. It is the aim of this study to determine the extent to which outside factors have influenced one ethnographic collection. To achieve these aims it is first essential to understand the museum (used in its broadest sense to include art museums). As Pearce (1992: 1) asserts, “museums are by nature institutions which hold the material evidence, objects and specimens, of the human and natural
history of our planet”. Though it is, of course, accepted that a great deal of material culture has been collected and stored outside of museums, it is also true that most collections of a considerable size eventually find themselves in some kind of museum context (Pearce 1992: 37).

The composition of an artefact base often defines the nature of the museum and can cover numerous fields from ornithology to modern material culture to minerals. Karp and Lavine (1991) have also described four types of museums: The natural history, culture history, a combination of natural and cultural history and specialist or “niche” museums. My study is concerned with ethnographic collections and, specifically, those acquired from Indigenous cultures in Australia during the mid-twentieth century. In terms of ethnology, museum collections have the ability to preserve large amounts of contemporaneous material, which was gained by one culture from another.

Ethnographic collections acquired for and stored by museums have special benefits and disadvantages for making contextually sensitive inferences about human behaviour. Coates (1989: 1-2) has stated that, “collections… are often seen as providing objective information or ‘facts’ about societies from which they were acquired”. This study may emphasise a defeat of this view coming from the nature of the collection process and the formation of selection criteria (see Chapters Two and Five).

It may be this lack of context and, in turn, contextual understanding that has led researchers such as Altieri (in Aagaard-Mogensen 1988: 157) to state that, “of all the institutions developed during the nineteenth century perhaps none has received such uniformly bad press by contemporary pundits as the museum”. This “bad press” has, to some extent, often been due to museums failing to place their artefact base in context or to acknowledge societies cultural influences on their collections. This lack of context and understanding has often made ethnographic collections relatively ineffective in accurately interpreting aspects of the cultures from which they were acquired.

The ethnographic collection with which this study is concerned was acquired during the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land (AASEAL) in 1948. The extent to which individuals, institutions, and the numerous biases that they harboured, have influenced this collection is a focus of this thesis. It is hypothesised that due to the nature of collection, the
AASEAL collection may be more representative of the collector’s cultures than the Indigenous cultures from which the artefacts were acquired.

Studying an Ethnographic Collection

Four themes are obvious concerning the studies that have been published on ethnographic collections of Indigenous artefacts in Australia. In general, collections and the studies that chronicle them have been considered the raw material for further archaeological research. First, technical works are prevalent in which collections are used to test and develop new analytical techniques (Buhmann et al 1976). Secondly, some projects have used collections to answer specific questions about the manufacture or use of a particular kind of artefact (Block 1987; Jones 1987; Wright 1979). Thirdly, there are also catalogues of collections that aid in the dissemination of information concerning the material held by otherwise disparate institutions (Florek 1993; McCarthy 1958).

Finally, with the development of explicit museum theory in relatively recent years, the phenomenon of museums and their collections have begun to demand more recognition. This has seen the development of studies that seek to contextualise collections by investigating the historical backgrounds and circumstances under which they were acquired (Coates 1989; Cooper 1975; Mulvaney 1983). Very few higher degrees have concentrated on the research potential of ethnographic collections (exceptions include Cosgrove 1984, Sculthorpe 1987). Contextualising researchers have seen collections as important aspects of culture in themselves (see Chapter Two). This, in short, is the meta-narrative of this study; assisting to place the American-Australian Scientific Expedition ethnographic collection in context.

The American-Australian Scientific Expedition

The importance of understanding the history of AASEAL has meant that Chapter Three is devoted to a description of it. Briefly, the expedition occurred first and foremost for political reasons. Charles Mountford, a filmmaker and lecturer working for the Commonwealth Government of Australia, and an Honorary Associate in Ethnology at the South Australian Museum, toured the United States of America in 1945 and 1946 showing films of Indigenous life in Australia, which he had produced earlier in his career. Though it was the National Geographic Society who provided the original funding for a small expedition to Arnhem Land led by Mountford, the Commonwealth Government of Australia was anxious to assist. Their primary motivation for supporting Mountford was to gain favorable publicity for Australia and to
encourage good relations between this country and the United States of America following World War Two (see Chapter Three).

Officially, the aims of the expedition were to observe and collect from Indigenous communities and to gain evidence for the origins of these communities. With the involvement of other institutions including the Australian Museum and the Smithsonian Institution, the “small” expedition grew to seventeen researchers from a variety of disciplines, nationalities and, indeed, cultural experiences, three base camps and nine months in Northern Australia. Two previously unnamed members whose work is relevant to this study because of their collection of ethnographic artefacts are Frederick McCarthy, a social anthropologist from the Australian Museum and Frank Setzler, an archaeologist with the Smithsonian Institution.

From a collecting point of view the results of the expedition went far beyond anyone’s expectations with 13,500 plant specimens, 30,000 fish, 850 birds, 460 mammals, 2144 ethnological artefacts and 1160 archaeological artefacts (these will be discussed throughout the thesis). Another 241 pieces of skeletal material were acquired from rock shelters and excavations. The fieldwork resulted in thousands of monochrome and colour photographs, five miles of colour film, and reels of sound recordings. Three colour films were also produced: *Arnhem Land, Aborigines of the Sea Coast* (also known as *Life on the Sea Coast*), and *Birds and Billabongs* (Mountford 1975: 231). In addition to the physical collections, each researcher was supplied with diaries to keep a daily log of events.

Previous Research
AASEAL was well publicised during the year it took place, 1948 (see Figure 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). Newspaper reports, radio interviews, and films all documented the importance with which this expedition was regarded. The complete scientific results of the expedition were published in four volumes totaling 2,100 pages of text and approximately 500 illustrations (Mountford 1956, 1960; Mountford & Specht 1958; Specht 1964). The National Geographic Society published four articles on the expedition in the years following. These were David Johnson’s (1955: 487-500) *The Incredible Kangaroo*, Charles Mountford’s (1949: 745-782) *Exploring Stone Age Arnhem Land* and *Australia’s Stone Age Men* (1963: 385-392) and Howell Walker’s (1949: 417-430) *Cruise to Stone Age Arnhem Land*. 
Figure 1.1: Biro advertisement featuring the American-Australian Scientific Expedition (Advertiser 17.3.48; McCarthy Diary Six)
Figure 1.2: Joliffe cartoon featuring members of AASEAL (McCarthy Diary Six n.d.)
Figure 1.3: Jolliffe cartoon featuring the deputy leader of AASEAL and his message to Fred McCarthy (McCarthy Diary Six n.d.)
Since these National Geographic articles, few texts have explicitly dealt with the history of expedition. The exception to this rule is Colin Simpson (1951) who discusses his brief visit with AASEAL in Adam in Ochre. Most of the expedition members used artefacts collected during this expedition in their later publications. Examples include McCarthy (1955: 368-371) Arnhem Land Baskets, McCarthy (1952: 302-305), Aboriginal rain-makers and their ways, McCarthy (1953: 21-23) Purse-net fishing in Arnhem Land, Mountford (1961) Aboriginal Art, Mountford (1966) Aboriginal Art from Australia, and Setzler and McCarthy (1950: 1-5) A unique archaeological specimen from Australia.

The single most important work on the expedition and its ethnographic collection in recent years has been Craig Elliott’s (1992) cataloguing consultancy report for the National Museum of Australia. Elliott documented many of the methods of collection and some of the original and present distribution of the artefacts. His main focus, however, was understandably the National Museum of Australia’s collection. His excellent cataloguing and recording (particularly of the bark paintings) should provide other museums with a template for further investigating their own artefacts from AASEAL. Chris Jones’ (1987) Graduate Diploma thesis on the collection of toys is one of only three other works to be concerned with artefacts collected purely on AASEAL. The other two are Stan Florek’s (1993: 117-124) F.D. McCarthy’s String Figures from Yirrkala: a Museum Perspective and Margo Neale’s (1998: 210-217) article for the Queensland Art Gallery concerning the “bastard” bark paintings received by this institution. This work covers the rarely discussed issue of bark paintings entering art galleries rather than museums during the middle of the twentieth century and later (see also Morphy 1991; Morphy 1994; Morphy 1998; Ryan 1990; Sutton 1988).

Other researchers have included AASEAL artefacts with similar material from other collections to examine specific artefact types such as Claudia Haagen’s (1994) Bush Toys. Judith Ryan (1990) also discusses bark paintings from AASEAL in context with other paintings held in the National Gallery of Victoria. Since the reviews of the Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land ceased to emerge in journals, Annie Clarke (1998) is the only researcher who has written on these works (Anonymous 1957; Berndt 1958; Bouteller 1957; Elkin 1961; Gruber 1962; Kaberry 1962; Kabo 1958; Worsley 1957). Her paper was concerned with the language of these volumes and, particularly, with analysing whether gender could be clearly seen in the language of Fred McCarthy and Margaret McArthur.
The amount of documentation surrounding AASEAL is enormous especially considering the unpublished journals and correspondence that are kept in museums and libraries in Australia and in the United States of America. Despite this, no history of AASEAL, except that written by Mountford in 1956, has been written and many of the studies concerning the collection or parts of the collection are unpublished or, in the case of the Elliott report, partially confidential. It is also important that a great deal of information and objects are held in Washington D.C. and little of the work written on AASEAL in Australia has taken this American material into account, leaving an empirical gap in any interpretations (see Appendix A).

In all of these published and unpublished texts, there is no evidence that any researcher has tried to locate all of the ethnographic, archaeological or physical anthropological material collected during AASEAL. Remedying this lacuna was an important focus of my study (see Appendix B). Examined in Chapter Two of this thesis are the theoretical aspects of archaeology, museology and collecting. More specifically, the theoretical positioning of the researchers in 1948 and the theoretical positioning of this study will be discussed followed by an outline of the methodologies employed. Chapter Five represents a discussion of the collection strategies employed by the AASEAL scientists to acquire the ethnographic collection while the bark paintings are considered in further detail. In the following chapter the distribution and changing nature of the collection since 1948 is presented. This includes a discussion of the missing, damaged and restricted artefacts as well as those traded by individuals and institutions. Finally, Chapter Seven and Eight are the analysis of, firstly, the ethnographic collection and, secondly, the bark paintings only. Conclusions from these analyses are drawn in Chapter Nine.

Conclusions
At first glance a person looking at the history of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition may think that its story begins and finishes with the pitching of the tents in March 1948 to their striking in November 1948. This is not the case. AASEAL spanned two continents and nearly two decades from the birth of the idea in 1945 to the publishing of the last volume of the records in 1964. The repercussions of AASEAL are also likely to keep re-appearing in the future as the Indigenous communities begin to ask questions regarding the distribution of their, sometimes sacred, material culture.

This archaeological study aims to use historical and physical records of AASEAL to better understand the influences that assisted in forming the ethnographic collection and, in turn,
institutional collections. In short, answers are sought to the question of representivity. Is the AASEAL ethnographic collection actually representative of the Indigenous cultures from which the material was attained or did the process of collection significantly distort those cultures and make them subaltern to the activity of collecting, preserving and displaying? With the impossibility of a detailed inventory of all the material being used by the Indigenous communities visited, the material taken is used to define what was not taken and, in turn, what criteria selection was based upon. In line with this, an attempt will be made to show how knowledge of these collecting biases can affect the conclusions reached in the analysis of ethnographic collections, representation of Indigenous cultures in western institutions and future collection strategies.

Today, as the expedition celebrates its fifty-second anniversary, it is hoped that this thesis might bring the expedition, its members and their collections to the attention of another generation of people. Not just archaeologists, anthropologists or historians but also descendants of the Indigenous people to whom the white “success” of the expedition is due.
2
Theoretical Assessment and Literature Review

Museums have appropriated culture in many ways. All of our collections were made with political agendas - albeit unconscious ones - in mind, and all bear the indelible marks of the contexts from which they arose, once we choose to look for them (Pearce 1994: 1).

Introduction
This thesis has been written from an archaeological perspective but the necessity to draw from other disciplines and to use their methods of investigation was evident from the beginning. This is contrary to what Hodder has described as the, “traditional archaeological authority of a closed discourse constructed by archaeologists themselves” (Hodder 1999: 208).

The types of research skills necessary to make use of ethnographic collections falls mainly into a disciplinary domain located within and between archaeology, anthropology, museology, critical theory and history (Sturtevant 1973). While archaeologists are familiar with contextualising sites and artefacts, contextualising ethnographic collections requires assistance from these other disciplinary domains. Fundamental to the study of ethnographic collections of artefacts is museology the personal and institutional influences on acquisition of artefacts. Museology is broadly concerned with the establishment and development of collections of artefacts that, in turn, feed into the museum’s educative, political and social roles (Vergo 1989: 1).

This chapter will discuss the dominant theoretical arguments that have impacted on the study of museums, collecting and archaeological inquiry into ethnographic collections. While many aspects of human nature such as the need to collect would appear on the surface to be uncomplicated and straightforward, on closer examination they are often found to have aspects that have ingress to other, non-museological aspects of life. As Pearce states, “clearly the gathering together of chosen objects for purposes regarded as special is of great importance, as a social phenomenon, as a focus of personal emotion and as an economic force” (Pearce 1995: vii).

This chapter will flow from a general discussion of the evolution of human thought as understood by Western philosophers and thinkers in relation to anthropological ideas and, in turn, point
particularly to modernism and postmodernism as the dominating theories. Theories and hypotheses stemming from this discussion on the selection and collection of artefacts (as well as the study of this phenomenon) will be discussed and conclusions drawn to place specific collecting theories within more general theories about human behaviour.

The Evolution of Human Thought

The evolution of human thought – at least according to Western, post-Enlightenment epistemology - has for this study, rather simplistically but also conveniently, been divided into three primary stages of increasing objectivity. The first stage is described as human beings explaining events as the outcome of the arbitrary actions of powerful but capricious gods (Foucault 1970: 245; Layton 1997: 186). This stage is described as a disordered body of learning in which all things in the world could be linked indiscriminately to humanity’s experiences, traditions or credulities as revealed by Divine agency (Foucault 1970: 51).

The second stage was what Foucault (1970: 219) described as the “Classical metaphysic” or rather a stage that resided in the gap between human beings’ perception (or imagination) and the articulation this human perception had with the understanding and will of a single sentient God. Layton (1997: 186) describes this as the formulation of metaphysical abstractions with Saint Thomas Aquinas’ idea of universals serving as an example (Blackburn 1994: 3, 22, 23, 387).

The final stage explained the world in terms of scientific truth that was based on a close and true observation of the world external to the self. As Foucault (1970: 218) stated, this “Classical order” distributed across a permanent space the non-quantitative identities and differences that separated and united things and, in turn, had power over human beings’ discourse. Descartes forcefully formulated the idea of a unitary human ego that existed in relation to an external world that the ego perceived by the senses five. These sense perceptions are then the primary means of knowing the world and the self. Western Europe alone, it was claimed, had achieved the third stage (Layton 1997: 186).
Scientific Truth

Figure 2.1: A simple chart showing the basic stages in the evolution of human thought as described by Foucault 1970 and Layton 1997

The first and second stages described above play only a small role in the theoretical ideas of this thesis - those of leading to the influential stages concerning material culture and its uses in establishing and promoting worldviews. The third stage of scientific truth, however, deserves discussion prior to the relating of ideas on collecting from a postmodern perspective.

Scientific Truth (Modernism)
Before explaining the postmodern context in which this thesis has been written, it is essential to understand why postmodernism emerged or, more accurately, what postmodernism is rebelling against. Comte (in Layton 1997: 185) has described four trends in this rebellion against modernism found commonly in the writings of postmodernists:

- The arrogance of the Enlightenment, or modernist conceit that the white, European male can detach himself from his culture and take a comprehensive, objective stand in his study of the world.
- The error of supposing that theories enable knowledge of the world “as it really is”.
- If meanings are constructed through interaction, there can be no pre-existing Durkheimian “collective consciousness”.
- There is no ivory tower for the scientist to retreat into; all theories are political and must be judged by their practical effects on people’s lives.

The idea of scientific truth and the tradition of objective knowledge created during the Enlightenment overcame a period during which it was believed that acceptance of divinity revealed truth (Foucault 1970: 219; Layton 1997: 186). A divinely ordained social order was replaced by the idea that the truth of how the world worked could be discovered by scientific investigation. This, in turn, was believed to lead to the construction of a better society in which to live (Layton 1997: 186).

In essence, modernity was concerned with the development of meta-narratives, overarching theories through which objective realities and truths could be defined (examples here include Linnaeus’ scheme of taxonomy and Darwin’s theory of natural selection (Foucault 1970: 226; Layton 1997: 186). As Foucault (1970: 162) stated, “the critical question concerned the basis for
resemblance and the existence of genus”. At the very base of this idea rested the belief that objective reality existed and could be apprehended and quantified. This gave power to scientific knowledge and understanding arrived at by the operation of human reason upon the observed world (Layton 1997: 186).

The Postmodern Condition

Civilisation is not something absolute but… relative, and our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilisation goes (Boas 1887, in Stocking 1982: 13).

Layton (1997: 185) and Walsh (1995: 131) attempted to describe the ironic nature of postmodernism by stating that it means different things to different people and is characterised by a feeling of placelessness. Johnson (1999: 165) argued that the decline of confidence in the Enlightenment, in human perfectibility, or to intrinsic Truth is not so much an intellectual position as the way the world is at the end of the millennium. Pearce (1995: 140) described postmodernism as producing a world in which the multiplicity of objects float free in a cultural landscape in which boundaries seem to have dissolved. It is also evident that the concept of postmodernism is ironic because the word itself is used to dispute the possibility of any grand theory of human behaviour (Layton 1997: 185).

Layton (1997: 186) separates Postmodernism into two schools. The first is the so-called “extreme” postmodernism in which the French philosopher Derrida has been classified. Derrida argued that structures of meaning can never be translated in their entirety and are not anchored by reference to the outside world. Cultures, our culture included, have constructed autonomous, self-contained worlds of meaning. Foucault has been classified within the second school of so-called “moderate” postmodernism. Moderate postmodernists often argue that there are communities who share a common “discourse” but that, while each discourse has its own rules, reference can nonetheless be made to structures and entities that exist independently of that discourse but which can affect its form because of the recursive relationship between structure and discourse (Bourdieu 1990; Johnson 1999: 165-166; Layton 1997: 186).

In our relationship with the material world, the philosophical and social uncertainties of the postmodernist period have produced a reflexive state of mind in which the old hierarchies of value seem less secure and are perceived as social constructions rather than as explanations of
natural truth (Pearce 1995: 141). Pearce (1995: 141) stated that material culture collections are traditionally given a low ranking in the judgmental hierarchy and are correspondingly taken to be orders of interest in their own right. This study can be seen as a result of this influence – an institutional collection being viewed as an historical document in its own right. It is important, therefore, to understand how modernism and postmodernism have affected the idea and the practice of collecting.

Collecting

The very act of collecting has a political or ideological or aesthetic dimension that cannot be overlooked (Vergo 1988: 2)

It would seem timely here to turn the discussion from one of more general epistemological and ontological theories into one specific to collecting. Muensterberger (1994: 4) has given a general definition of collecting as, “the selecting, gathering, and keeping of objects of subjective value”. He then goes on to look further into this question of defining collecting, asking, “is it an obsession? An addiction? Is it a passion or urge, or perhaps a need to hold, to possess, to accumulate?” (Muensterberger 1994: 3).

It is important to state that people have been collecting for thousands of years, if not more, and at each of these stages they have collected for different reasons. As Vergo (1988: 2-3) stated, “whether we like it or not, every acquisition (and indeed disposal), every juxtaposition or arrangement of an object… means placing a certain construction upon history”, and thus, human beings have been using collections to construct history. Elsner (et al 1994: 2) also commented “the history of collecting is… the narrative of how human beings have striven to accommodate, to appropriate and to extend the taxonomies and systems of knowledge they have inherited”. Further to this he adds, “social order is itself inherently collective: it thrives on classification, on rule, on labels, sets and systems” (Elsner et al 1994: 2). In this way, collecting extends to empires collecting countries and populations, early modern Europe secular authorities collecting slaves, churches collecting souls and archaeologists collecting artefacts and knowledge.

Alexander (in Aagaard-Mogensen 1988: 7) stated that, “of all the human traits that distinguish man [sic] from other animals, certainly the presence of cultural memory stands out”. By this he means not just the creation of tools but greater inventiveness leading to forms of decoration, to art and ultimately the idea of imagination. He writes of human beings having the power to imagine
things other than as they appear, to create stories, to develop religious beliefs, erect monuments, to record history and to be continually interested in the past, “these are marks of man’s [sic] self-awareness and self-interest” (Alexander, in Aagaard-Mogensen 1988: 7). From this interest in the past comes an interest in collecting to preserve and control the past. It has been argued that sacred or magical values were attributed to ancient cultural remains, which was later followed by an interest in human relics for their own sake. Thus, there develops a secondary interest in recording and discovering human inheritance (Alexander, in Aagaard-Mogensen 1988: 8).

The question here lies in how modernism or “scientific truth” manifested itself in the form of collecting. Modernism allows for many different theories of human nature to exist. Two such theories include Darwin’s Theory of Natural Selection and the idea of unilineal progress (Pearce 1995: 123). Though these two theories were formally contradictory, they came to be seen as synonymous and in the context of imperialism, a primary influence on this study, they are known as Social Darwinism (Griffiths 1996: 10).

As a consequence of changing social theories, changes were occurring in collection practices and, in turn, museum practices. By the mid-nineteenth century, collections of curiosities were giving way to the modernist scientific museum study based on classificatory principles. People collected and arranged their artefacts to support these theories with tangible “scientific evidence” (Foucault 1970: 162; Griffiths 1996: 10; Pearce 1995: 123). Consequently, alongside of the classification of human beings was the classification of their material culture.

Evolutionary theory had prompted new ethnological displays and the most influential British curator was Lieutenant-General Pitt-Rivers who was the first person to establish an archaeological and ethnological museum in Britain (Hudson 1987: 31).

Pitt Rivers’ collection drive was linked with an overarching philosophy of man [sic] and material culture in which Darwinian ideas, applied to objects, yielded a scheme whereby artefact types developed one from another according to a process of natural selection (Pearce 1992: 8).

Importantly Pitt-Rivers believed that historical sequences could be reconstructed using actual objects to show different cultural levels achieved by different human groups and to illustrate notions of progress (Pearce 1992: 8). He was a Darwinist and was untroubled with the perceived
direct correlation between the evolution of species by natural selection and the progress of human society. He often compared the prehistorian to the palaeontologist and extinct fauna to primitive humans (Hudson 1987: 31).

Meanwhile, archaeologists and anthropologists were beginning to accumulate large museum collections which were backed by interpretive ideas about typology deriving from Pitt-Rivers’ classificatory schema, eighteenth-century biology and later Vere Gordon Childe’s ideas on the relationship between material evidence and human cultures (Pearce 1992: 8).

The artefact during this period became a piece of primary evidence in a Western view of natural and cultural development and was therefore placed upon an ascending evolutionary ladder, just as human beings were (Clifford 1988: 228; Griffiths 1996: 22; Pearce 1995: 139). It is also relevant that the producers of knowledge – Victorian Europe - had a formal belief in the “Great Chain of Being” that asserted Victorian Europe’s physical and intellectual superiority (Lovejoy 1964). Such superiority was Euro centric and measured by the presence and absence of certain types of objects such as the wheel, monumental architecture, writing and so forth. This science of classification is, in Gould’s words (in Elsner et al 1994: 2) a mirror of our thoughts, its changes through time and is the best guide to the history of human perceptions. Elsner (et al 1994: 2) continued with the idea that if classification is the mirror of collective humanity’s thoughts and perceptions, then collecting is its material embodiment.

It is within these ideas that the political rationality, a term stolen from Foucault, of modernist collecting emerges (Bennett 1995: 89). Foucault (in Bennett 1995: 90) argued that the emergence of new technologies, which aim at regulating the conduct of individuals and populations, are characterised by their own specific rationalities and generate their own specific fields of political problems and relations. Social Darwinism, one of the meta-narratives developed in the modernist climate, indirectly led to classification and, in turn, to oppression of cultures revealing the political nature of these theories and, therefore, their political rationality (Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 25).

From Chapters Three and Four, it will be seen that acquiring a large collection of Indigenous Australian material culture was one of the primary aims of AASEAL. From this the question must be asked, what motivated these men and women to collect artefacts of another culture? What made the gaining of this collection important enough that two governments were willing to
donate many thousands of dollars and 17 highly educated individuals were willing to give up years to the cause? The answer has wider implications than the AASEAL expedition.

Nietzsche (1974: 24) once described the common view of Australia in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as one of a “palaeontological penal colony” because the Western world viewed the continent as a museum where the past could still be seen in a natural state. This idea may have stemmed from the concept of Social Darwinism. The scientific world at this time assumed that there was a universal model of human society and human nature. Tuhiwai Smith (1999: 86) has argued that many Indigenous cultures were seen as occupying one of several, more primitive stages, through which humanity had passed before reaching its apogee in the form of Victorian Europe. This was the case in Australia where Indigenous cultures could show the scientific world the most simple and fundamental systems of social organisation.

Indigenous cultures were placed on the lowest rung of the evolutionary ladder as biological and cultural relics “slipping into extinction” (Griffiths 1996: 10; see Figure 2.2). Darwin (1871: 521) commented in his publication *Descent of Man* that “at some future period not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, replace the savage races throughout the world”.

With most human beings all occupying one or other rung on this evolutionary ladder or “great chain of being”, those on the top rungs felt they could look down and view the past in authoritative contemplation. While looking they could reach down and take souvenirs of this past and place them on their mantle for pleasure. Some even took to analysing these souvenirs, eventually labeling themselves as archaeologists.

The gathering of artefacts from other cultures for the purposes of display and study was seen in the nineteenth century as a refined and educated form of hunting. Naturalists and antiquarians were inspired by the thrill of the chase. Whether they were chasing nature or culture, the thrill existed and just as they considered hunting to be the primary reason for the production of artefacts, so was it their reason for collecting (Griffiths 1996: 19-20). As Griffiths’ (1996: 21) argued, “the popularisation of natural history in this period was inseparable from frontier experience, imitations of war, hunting prowess, evolutionary morals, social status and ‘manly pursuits’. Natural history became an outdoor school of character formation”. Pearce (1995: 126)
Figure 2.2: The gradual development of “Bull”, from the Bulletin’s commentary on the social dangers of colonisation. The caption read: “J. Bull has annexed another 15,000 square miles filled with niggers. (1) There was a white Bull once. (2) Then he became light brown, and bought a turban. (3) He grew still more brown, acquired a big sash and a curved sword. (4) His brownness increased, and he acquired petticoats and funny shoes. (5) Gradually he became so brown that he was practically black, and he undressed himself again and wore a loin-cloth. (6) And in the end he will annex so many niggers that he will be quite black, and the last scene will be an aboriginal Bull roasting his ‘possum over a small fire.’” (Bulletin cover, 18 March 1909; Griffiths 1996: 13).
would seem to agree stating that natural history collecting “afforded an intellectual outlet for the middle class… and gave collectors the feeling of being at the cutting edge of their time”.

By the mid-nineteenth century, collections were rarely being formed without debate. Pearce (1995: 124) argued that from roughly the eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century, two aspects of collecting were common. The first concentrated upon art and natural history and manifested itself in important museums to which the general public was allowed. The second aspect concentrated upon historical and exotic material with its exhibition being commercially organised. Between these two aspects lurked the major private collectors, often with a foot in both of the aforementioned aspects of collecting (Pearce 1995: 124).

The most common view by Europeans at this time was that they had a history and were continually changing and evolving and could thus be analysed through history whereas their objects of study, the “primitive people”, were timeless and were, therefore, subjected to a different form of analysis - Anthropology (Griffiths 1996: 24-25; Clifford 1988: 220-1). In other words, those cultures occupying the top rungs of the evolutionary ladder were believed to be continually moving upwards towards an ever more advance and enlightened state whereas those occupying the lower rungs were perceived to be static or worse. This schema also applied to the material cultures or artefacts of each culture. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, most colonial collectors also saw the cultures from which they were collecting as “endangered” (see Chapter Five).

With some exceptions, the full implications of natural selection and Social Darwinism were not confronted until the twentieth century and many would argue that they are still being addressed today (Griffiths 1996: 11).

In December 1949, Charles Mountford (1949: 745-782) published an article entitled “Exploring Stone Age Arnhem Land”. This title reveals the continuation of these Social Darwinian views of society by some archaeologists at least into the 1950s (Mountford 1949: 745-782). Terms such as “Stone Age”, “prehistoric” and “primitive” proved to be powerful metaphors for the “uncivilised” and conveyed to the world an image of a static and moribund culture (see Figure 2.3).

Calmly, slowly, the aborigines returned to their halcyon life in Arnhem
Land where haste had no place, where time never mattered, where
Figure 2.3: The title page of a publicity brochure for Mountford’s 1945 and 1946 lecture tour to the United States of America (Lanshed 1972: 120)
tribal folk didn’t reckon in days or years or even centuries (Mountford 1949: 782).

The Museum

It is worth reiterating here that collections are, more often than not, associated with modern museums (Pearce 1992: 1). It is for this reason that this discussion of the museum appears in a chapter dealing with theory and following a discussion of changing theoretical positions. The aim here is not to give a history of museums, but rather to give an insight into the theoretical positioning of the museums today and its predecessors.

There is little doubt that collecting as a habit was in existence far back into prehistory (Pearce 1992: 1). There is also little doubt that the word “museum” comes to us from classical times as a place to worship muses (Pearce 1992: 1-2). Vergo (1989: 1) stated that the museum could be traced back to the Ptolemaic mouseion at Alexandria, which was thought to be a mix between a library, a place for scholars, for historians and for philosophers. Similarly, collections have been formed and displayed worldwide (Clunas 1991; Goswamy 1991; Yamaguchi 1991). Despite all these comments it is usually assumed that the museum as a modern institution came first to the Renaissance cities and courts of Italy around the middle of the fifteenth century and then spread to other continents (Pearce 1992: 1-2; Vergo 1989: 1-2).

In Western culture, there has been a gradual expansion of interest in human history from ancient epics and writings of historians (such as Herodotus), to the collecting of such writings in libraries (such as the Great Library at Alexandria), to the ecclesiastical collections in the Middle Ages, to the baronical collections of the Renaissance, and to the creation of specialist museums in the eighteenth century (Alexander, in Aagaard-Mogensen 1988: 8). Importantly, these meeting places such as libraries represented situations where leisured men could amassed knowledge and become increasingly concerned with curiosities of the natural and cultural world. These curiosities were collected in cabinets, which eventually grew into whole rooms, buildings and institutions. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there developed an interest in the arranging of material within the museum context.

More recently, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1989: 63) has argued that the upheavals of the French Revolution created the conditions of emergence for a new “truth”, a new rationality, out of which came a new functionality for a new institution, the public museum. In other words, the public
museum was established as a means of sharing what had previously been private (Bennett 1995: 89). Bennett (1995: 93) disagreed stating, “they [museums] all constituted socially enclosed spaces to which access was remarkably restricted”. He also argued that although the timing of the public museums revolution varied from country to country, by the mid-nineteenth century the principles of the new form were apparent everywhere and, “everyone, at least in theory, was welcome” (Bennett 1995: 93). In short, the public museum is an institution whose distinguishing characteristics were clarified during the first half of the nineteenth century (Bennett 1995: 92).

The public museum was shaped with two deeply contradictory functions – that of being an elite temple of the arts, as well as a utilitarian instrument for democratic education. Later a third function was added – that of being an instrument of disciplinary society (Hooper-Greenhill 1989: 63). Foucault (1977) has also discussed the idea of museums as an instrument. He argued that the development of modern forms of government is traced in the emergence of new technologies that aim to regulate the conduct of individuals and populations. As such, these technologies are characterised by their own specific rationalities: they constitute distinct and specific modalities for the exercise of power (Foucault, in Bennett 1995: 90). Other museum theorists such as Goodman (in Aagaard-Mogensen 1988: 140) have appeared to be devoted to the idea of the museum as a disciplinary institution stating, “a museum functions much like other institutions as a house of detention, a house of rehabilitation, or a house of pleasure; or in the vernacular, a jailhouse, a madhouse, or - a teahouse”.

Social Darwinism

The change to a public museum was not simply a matter of the state claiming ownership of cultural property on behalf of the public or of the museum opening its doors to all enfranchised citizens. It was also about the new organisational principles governing the arrangement of objects within the museum (Bennett 1995: 95). Museum displays came to be governed by new scientific principles with stress being laid upon observable differences and similarities rather than hidden resemblances (Bennett 1995: 96).

The idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place at all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organising in this a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an
immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity (Foucault 1986: 26).

Public museums felt the need to distinguish themselves from their antiquarian predecessors. As science appeared to emerge from ignorance into truth so did the museum attempt to emerge from chaos into order (Bennett 1995: 2). These institutions and their collections were perceived as the principle repositories of primary evidence in the form of artefacts (Pearce 1992: 2). The role of museums, collectors and collections in the modern view of moral improvement was increasingly that of an educator. Pearce (1992: 3) argued that these three phenomena were seen as playing their part in the development of the reliable and orderly citizens, which the Victorian establishment desired to see. They gave these moral qualities such as respectability and domesticity, tangible forms stemming from Layton’s (1997: 186) idea of constructing a better society in which to live (Pearce 1992: 3). In short, museums held the actual evidence and the true data, which the meta-narratives depended upon for verification (Pearce 1992: 4).

Museum displays came to be... governed by the new principles of scientific taxonomy, the stress was placed on the observable differences between things rather than their hidden resemblances; the common or ordinary object, accorded a representative function, was accorded priority over the exotic or unusual; and things were arranged as parts of series rather than as unique items (Bennett 1995: 96).

McCarthy (1984: 105) would seem to agree with this, reasoning that, “since the beginning of the modern era the prospect of a limitless advance of science and technology, accompanied at each step by moral and political improvement has exercised a considerable hold over Western thought”. Museums could project these contemporary worldviews simply by arranging the collected material in particular patterns (Pearce 1992: 4). Bennett’s (1995: 2) statement in relations to museums and art galleries that, “within each of which, objects were arranged in a manner calculated to make intelligible a scientific view of the world” would seem to agree with Pearce and McCarthy. Murray (1904, in Bennett 1995: 96) early in the twentieth century argued that the distinguishing factors of the modern museum were the principles of specialisation (e.g. geology museums, natural history museums) and classification, two scientific principles. This was different to pre-modern museums, which were designed to invoke surprise and wonder by exhibiting rare and exceptional artefacts (Bennett 1995: 96; Murray 1904: 208).
Jomard, curator at the Bibliotheque Royale, had argued as early as the 1820s for an ethnographic museum that would illustrate “the degree of civilisation of peoples… who are… but slightly advanced” (Jomard, in Bennett 1995: 96; Jomard, in Williams 1985: 140). It was not until General Augustus Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers developed his typological system, that displayed principles appropriate to Jomard’s objective were devised. Pitt-Rivers (in Daniels 1975: 171) stressed that his collection was, “not for the purpose of surprising anyone, either by the beauty or value of the objects exhibited, but solely with a view to instruction. For this purpose ordinary and typical specimens rather than rare objects have been selected and arranged in sequence”. Bennett (1995: 96) stated that it was not until the end of the century that these principles became widely dispersed (thanks mainly to Otis Mason of the Smithsonian).

Ethnographic collections at this time were being formed in an attempt to capture an image of a culture in terms of its objects as opposed to presenting a level of descriptions of cultural practices. The influence of the typological system developed by Pitt-Rivers deserves greater consideration. Pitt-Rivers became interested in Anthropology in the 1850s as a result of a detailed study he made of the history of firearms for the British Army. Throughout the 1860s he built up a large ethnographic collection and wrote on the principles of classification (Griffiths 1995: 20, 68; Pearce 1995: 266; Trigger 1989: 197).

During the latter half of the nineteenth century Pitt-Rivers arranged his collections in order to illustrate his research into the “principles and the course of human cultural evolution” (Chapman 1985: 39). As Balfour has stated, “he [Pitt-Rivers] was led to believe that the same principles must probably govern the development of the other arts, appliances and ideas of mankind” (Balfour in Myres 1906: v). Pitt-Rivers’ drive to collect was linked with an all encompassing philosophy of human beings and material culture in which Darwinian ideas, applied to objects, yielded a scheme whereby artefact types developed one from another according to a process of natural selection and which constituted the scientific, empirical evidence by which a culture could be assigned a rung on the Great Chain of Being (Pearce 1992: 8). Daniels (1975: 170) remarked “to prove this thesis and to illustrate its truth he [Pitt-Rivers] began collecting everything he could lay his hands on”.

“Pitt-Rivers and Petrie were mainly responsible for the transformation of the archaeological outlook from one of curiosity to one which was frankly sociological” (Daniels 1975: 171). He continues that Pitt-Rivers (and Petrie) were the leaders of the revolution in archaeology. This
revolution moved archaeology away from a study of art treasures (a nineteenth-century legacy from the late eighteenth-century study of classical antiquities) and from a contemplation of art objects to the contemplation of all objects (Daniels 1975: 171; Pearce 1995: 266).

Pitt-Rivers placed little emphasis upon the context of the material he collected. The collections were, consequently, arranged according to the assumptions of a “static” culture with no consideration of differences in form due to age, location or variations in function (Coates 1989: 2).

In reaction to the modern views of an ordered world, tangibly applied by Pitt-Rivers typological system, postmodernism meant that beliefs in universal notions of progress became undermined (Hodder 1999: 149; Lyotard 1984: 37). Crimp (1987: 62) argued, revealing a postmodern perspective, that the museum constitutes a specific form of the enclosure and restriction of cultural material. He believed that museums must break with this “enclosing” nature in order to become once more socially and politically relevant (Bennett 1995: 92; Crimp 1987: 62).

The New Museology

The enormous social expenditures the museums extract, the masses of wealth they hold, and the monstrous confidence in institutions governing citizens’ minds in virtually all civilised nations make it only too appropriate for critical intelligence to examine their nature and purposes (Aagaard-Mogensen 1988: 5).

After outlining the theoretical ideas of this thesis (the evolution of human thought by reference to post-Enlightenment paradigms, modernism, postmodernism, collecting, and the museum), and understanding the role of archaeology in analysing a museum collection, it would seem essential to discuss the relevant studies that have occurred and are still occurring in the field of museology. Texts concerning the so-called old museology can be found in large numbers. They deal with subjects such as museum administration, conservation, registration, sponsorship and so on. It is certainly not the aim of this chapter to outline these texts in detail. Rather, the aim lies with what Peter Vergo (1989) has called “new museology”. These studies may, in turn, give an insight into today’s society, what we value today and what researchers feel justified in researching. As Aagaard-Mogensen (1988: 5) stated:
With the intensity and breadth of intellectual interest cultural phenomena receive today, and the prominence of their philosophical status, the museum... is likely to exhibit some very general characteristics of human understanding and values. The ways contemporary thinkers, in- and outside the museum, flesh this out is then possibly as telling of humanistic concerns of our time as many social actions and scientific or philosophical analysis otherwise could be.

Arguably the most popular and widely read museum theorist is Susan Pearce (1992: 37) who justifies her research by stating that, “the making of a collection is one way in which we organise our relationship with the external physical world, and so the effort to understand them is one way of exploring our relationship with the world”. Pearce (1994: 1) also stated that, “museums have an obligation to try and understand themselves so that they can understand more clearly what messages they are giving and how these are received”. It would appear that it is from this feeling of obligation that theory dealing with museums has largely developed. Its development as a field, however, comes relatively recently compared with other similar fields of investigation. Apart from a flurry of investigation into children as collectors in the early twentieth century, very few people were concentrating their efforts on museums and their contents (Burk 1900; Whitley 1929).

Material culture studies, and museums, languished in the doldrums for most of the middle decades of this century, until around 1975 when ideas about the meanings of objects and how they can be studied underwent a radical shift as the broadly structuralist and post-structuralist ideas developed earlier in the century (Pearce 1992: 8). Macdonald (in Macdonald & Fife 1996: 1) has argued that the sudden interest in museums may stem from the practical problems, which have been and are continuing to face museums in recent decades. She stated (in Macdonald & Fife 1996: 1), “museums face an unremitting questioning about whom they are for and what their role should be”. Macdonald (in Macdonald & Fife 1996: 2) also admitted that the contradictory and ambivalent position museums are in today makes it desirable for further research to be undertaken.

Despite the fact that museums clearly act as “staging grounds” for many questions which are also at the heart of debates in social and cultural studies, the social scientific study of the museum is still
relatively under-developed by comparison with, say, that of the school 
(Macdonald, in Macdonald & Fife 1996: 2-3).

Peter Vergo’s (1989: 3) call for a, “radical re-examination of the role of museums” and Aagaard- 
Mogensen (1988: 5) similar assertion that, “a set of intellectual views and assessments of the 
museum today… is long overdue” seem to have attracted scholars over the past twelve years. 
Texts such as *Theorizing Museums* by Macdonald & Fife (1996), *The Birth of the Museum* by Bennett (1995), *The Representation of the Past* by Walsh (1992) and *A Cabinet of Curiosities* by Weil (1995), to name but a few, have pushed museum theory (including re-evaluations of long-
held beliefs) into the spotlight.

Not until long after the foundation of the first museums did anyone 
think of them as a phenomenon worthy of study; and it is more recently 
still that museology… has come to be recognised as a field of enquiry 
in its own right (Vergo 1989: 3).

Vergo introduced the idea of a new museology in his 1989 text appropriately titled *The New 
Museology*. He offered the idea that a new museology exists because of discontent with the old 
museology, which concentrated upon methods in museums. Vergo (1989: 3-4) argued that the 
new museology should be concerned with the purposes of museums. Aagaard-Mogensen (1988: 
5) also argued that that unless these trends changed, museums would find themselves dubbed 
“living fossils”.

One of the more “alternative” texts emerging out of the last twenty years of the twentieth century 
is Robert Lumley’s (1988) anthology *The Museum Time Machine* that appears as a critical study 
in the context of the old museology. While in more recent years texts such as Muensterberger’s 
Culture of Collecting* have looked at the psychological aspects of collection forming. Just like this 
study, both these texts are concerned with the appropriation of collections of artefacts by 
museums, how they were acquired and who acquired them.

Cameron discusses in his 1971 paper *The Museum: a Temple or the Forum* the idea of the 
traditional museum role and the newer role of the museum. As a temple, he writes, the museum 
plays a “timeless and universal function, the use of a structured sample of reality, not just as a 
reference but as an objective model against which to compare individual perceptions” (Cameron
1971: 201). In contrast to this, he presents the museum as a forum for, “confrontation, experimentation, and debate” (Cameron 1971: 197). At the time of his writing it still would have been credible for the “temple” role to be employed, yet, in 1991, when discussed by Karp & Levine (1991: 3) they assert that, “few serious museum practitioners would claim that a museum could be anything but a forum”.

Conclusions
As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the type of research skills necessary to make use of museum collections (in this case ethnographic collections) falls into a disciplinary domain located between archaeology, critical theory, anthropology, history and museology. Particularly in this study of influences on the acquisition of material culture, museums and their underlying theories hold a prime position. The archaeological influences on this study lie in the questions being asked of the material. This chapter has not, therefore, outlined the history of theory specifically in archaeology. Rather it has been primarily concerned with the development of worldviews, themselves impacting on collecting and, in turn, of museums, a common storehouse of archaeological evidence from which these researchers draw meaning. This is the theoretical background that informed the people of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition and the theoretical context and background of this thesis. Bennett (1995: 129) has stated that, “the past, as it is materially embodied in museums and heritage sites, is inescapably a product of the present which organizes it”. With this in mind, the theoretical stance of the researcher has been outlined, not only in this chapter, but also in the preface to this study.

It is easy to state that this thesis has been developed and written from a postmodern view. In other words, it has been written within a realm where there is a collapse of perspective and a lack of a fixed point leading to the many contradictions which Hodder (1999: 149) has stated forms so much of the postmodern world. It is within this context that the theoretical ideas related in this chapter are explored through AASEAL; a mid-twentieth century ethnographic expedition which had as its major aim the collection of Indigenous Australian ethnographic material. Thesis issues will be discussed in the following chapter.
3

The 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land

I’ve lived in this country close on forty years… but these scientist coves can come in from Washington or Sydney and show me things I never knew were here… Like the botanist, Ray Specht, asks me have I seen a certain kind of tree. I reckon I know which he means – seen dozens of ‘em. Then he asks me, ‘what sort of flower has it got?’ Well, I scratch the old head, and I tell Ray I’m damned if I think that tree’s got a flower at all. “All trees have got flowers,” he says. Now I never knew that… I tell you, an old bushy like me has learnt a lot from being with this expedition! (Bill Harney, in Simpson 1951: 40).

Introduction

This chapter outlines a history of the 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land because the present collections cannot be properly understood without an appreciation of their context i.e. the actual expedition and its individual members. As will be seen, AASEAL was a large and ambitious project, which escalated between 1945 and 1948 when the researchers began their fieldwork. Perhaps more than any other scientific expedition attempted at this time in Australia, politics dominated, particularly in relation to international relations and Indigenous affairs. This history has been reconstructed from various publications, letters (public and private), conversations, newspaper articles, diaries and numerous other forms of communication that derived from the expedition.

Preparation

Individual and institutional disagreements, health troubles, financial difficulties, and political concerns were all set aside in 1948 to allow AASEAL to occur. Seventeen researchers specifically represented the Australian Museum, Smithsonian Institution, the National Geographic Society and the Commonwealth Government of Australia. The South Australian amateur ethnologist, Charles Pearcy Mountford (see Plate 3.1), led the team in their nine months of fieldwork in northeastern Arnhem Land.
To begin this history and eventually understand how the collections came into being, it is necessary to return to the years 1940 and 1942. During this period, Adelaide University sponsored anthropological expeditions to Central Australia. Mountford, who was still working as a senior mechanic for the General Post Office in Adelaide, was assigned the position of leader for many of these expeditions. During this time in the field, Mountford had produced two significant colour documentary-style films *Tjurunga* (1942), and *Walkabout* (1942). These two films caught the attention of the Director-General of Information, Arthur Calwell (see Plate 3.2). Elliott (1992: 4) has stated that, “the Australian Government wanted to ensure continued military support and Mountford’s films were regarded as good propaganda”. This will be discussed later in this chapter in regard to the objectives of the expedition.

Seeing the films potential for good publicity, Calwell offered the amateur ethnologist a position in his department, organised for his release from the post office and sent Mountford on a lecture tour to promote Australia in the United States, as part of the “Australian overseas information programme” (Lamshed 1972: 110-111; Mountford 1975: 225; Mountford 1956: ix).

After numerous presentations of his films in the United States, it became apparent that Calwell was not the only person who was interested in these films. On February 2, 1945 Mountford found himself presenting to four thousand enthusiastic members of the National Geographic Society in Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C. Among the large crowd were members of the National Geographic Society Research Committee. Following the presentation they suggested he submit a proposal for a scientific research expedition to Arnhem Land (Lamshed 1972: 114-115; Mountford 1975: 225; Mountford 1956: ix).

By 1945, Mountford had spent twenty years unofficially researching the art, legends and domestic life of the Indigenous people of Australia, particularly in South and Central Australia (Mountford 1945: 2). He had extensive knowledge, particularly of the rock engravings of these areas and the everyday life of the Pitjendadjara, Adnjamatana and Aranda people, but no formal training until later in his life. Mountford's official proposal to the National Geographic Society included study in four main areas (Mountford 1945: 1-2):
Plate 3.2: Arthur Calwell 1931 (Australian Post July 5, 1951)
The Art of the Bark Paintings
• Ascertaining the method of producing bark paintings and the ceremonial restrictions regarding the use of colour.
• The relation of the designs to the legendary stories and the secret ceremonies.

The Art of the Body Paintings
• The designs used in body painting and their significance in ceremonial observances and associated taboos.
• The significance of the art form and its relationship to the totemic affiliations of the owner.

The General Ethnology of the People
• Aspects of the daily life, including hunting, fishing, and food gathering techniques.

Music in Secular and Ceremonial Life
• The recording of Aboriginal songs.

Mountford’s proposal was accepted by the National Geographic Society in April 1945.

I have read Mr. Mountford's research proposal with much interest and it has my hearty approval. In fact, I should favor increasing the grant to $10,000 or more if this would increase the effectiveness of the expedition. It seems to me that the opportunity afforded to study the fauna and flora of the region should be utilised (Briggs 20.4.45: 1).

Negotiations for funding and personnel began between the Australian Minister at Washington D.C., Sir Frederic Eggleston, the Minister for Information, the Honourable Arthur A. Calwell and the National Geographic Society (Mountford 1956: xxi; Mountford 1975: 225).

As news broke of the impending expedition, other organisations and institutions pounced upon Mountford and Wetmore's initial plan to include one or two other researchers (Wetmore 1945: 1; Mountford 1975: 226). The National Geographic Society suggested a small party of scientists, including a biologist from the Smithsonian Institution, with Mountford as the leader (Mountford 1956: ix). Mountford desired to take a marine zoologist and an ornithologist, but by May 1946, requests were being made for an ichthyologist, entomologist, botanist and another ethnologist (Wetmore 1945: 1; Wetmore 14.5.46: 1).

The Director of the Australian News and Information Bureau had assured Mountford that the Commonwealth Government would support the expedition by paying him his usual wage plus expenses and transport (Mountford 5.3.45: 4). The Minister for Air offered air transport, the
Minister for the Army made food and equipment available, and the Minister for Health arranged for three scientists from the Australian Institute of Anatomy to join the expedition and study Indigenous health and nutrition. The Minister for the Interior also placed his organisation in the Northern Territory at their disposal (Mountford 1956: xxi) The National Geographic Society, as quoted above, would pay all research project expenses (Mountford 5.3.45: 7). The Smithsonian Institution also based in Washington, D.C also agreed to make members of their staff available (Mountford 1956: xxi).

Objections to the Expedition

At the same time as these negotiations were occurring some scientists in Australia were declaring their objections. The chairman of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAS) and member of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, Professor A.P. Elkin (see Plate 3.3), was one of the scientists who expressed dismay at the choice of Mountford as leader. The anthropologist wrote directly to the secretary of the National Geographic Society, Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor pleading with them to take a trained social anthropologist on the expedition. Elkin expressed a view held by many Australian researchers that Mountford was not a genuine ethnologist due to his paucity of formal training (Elkin 1945: 1-2; Lamshed 1972: 120-121):

Mr. Mountford, who is a good photographer, especially of still subjects, and who has done valuable work in the recording and copying of native art, is not a trained social anthropologist, much to his own regret.... The getting of these materials and the understanding of their inter-relationship should only be undertaken by someone with thorough sociological knowledge and previous experience (Elkin 1945: 1).

Ronald and Catherine Berndt joined Elkin in his outcries (in Advertiser 28.2.48). Their major criticism stemmed from Mountford’s promoting of Arnhem Land as “the great unknown” to publicise the expedition (Mountford, in Herald 20.7.45; West Australian 12.1.48; The Mail 13.3.48; S.M.H. 20.3.48; The Mail 17.7.48; Herald 18.11.48). They and other researchers had been working in these areas for many years. The Sun (9.3.48) based in Melbourne, for example, ran a story concerning the Expedition entitled, “U.S. Allies for Assault on Last Frontier” from which is derived the title of this thesis. It was also important that Mountford’s films and not his expertise as a researcher led to his invitation to lead the American-Australian Scientific
Plate 3.3: Elkin and unnamed indigenous men from northeast Arnhem Land (Elkin 1938: 330)
Expedition. Elkin constantly attacked Mountford’s lack of formal credentials and his style of writing (storytelling) not only before this expedition but also on many other occasions. For example, in 1938 Mountford applied to the Carnegie Trust for fieldwork funds that were granted, but were later withdrawn, following intervention by Elkin (Lamshed 1972: 73).

Mountford, who was acquainted with Professor Elkin, helped Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor write a reply to what he considered an insulting letter (Lamshed 1972: 121-122). The reply included the announcement of Mountford’s leadership role and Professor Elkin was instructed to contact the leader directly regarding any problems (Lamshed 1972: 120-121).

During AASEAL Elkin arranged for Mr. Coates, a Native Affairs Department Patrol Officer to tail the party (Wise 1985: 205). Coates particularly kept Elkin abreast of Mountford’s work in the field. The anthropologist was said to be delighted with the problems encountered by the field-workers (to be discussed later in this chapter) and laughed at the leader’s research stating, “I see Mountford is busily discovering things that have been known for years” (Elkin, in Wise 1985: 205).

Mountford saw these attacks as jealousy, and suggested in his diaries that Elkin wanted to lead the expedition (Mountford M-S, V.76: 12a). Lamshed (1972: 188) suggested that Mountford did not worry himself about these matters; nevertheless, he was conscious of his lack of training and rarely referred to himself as an anthropologist but rather a fieldworker.

I have not had the academic training in philosophy for that [cultural interpretation]. Without such training, it would be presumptuous, as well as dangerous, to venture into such a field. I am content to have gathered and verified the basic material so that others working now, or those who will come after, may use it to further their studies on the origin and development of primitive man (Lamshed 1972: 188).

It is possible that Mountford’s difference in background to other researchers involved in collecting may manifest itself in the forms that his collections take. In other words, is his lack of anthropological training visible in the AASEAL ethnographic collection? This will be addressed in Chapters Seven and Eight.
Aims of the Expedition

Before discussing the events surrounding the fieldwork undertaken by the expedition members it is essential that the aims of the expedition be fully understood as they give insights into the act of collecting. The official aim of the expedition was to observe the everyday life of Indigenous people of Arnhem Land, to determine where they originally came from, to learn how they coped with their own environment and to collect specimens of their material culture (Mountford 1949: 745). This was less specific in the funding application to the National Geographic Society but not dissimilar (Mountford 5.3.45: 1-2). These, however, were just the explicit and official aims of the expedition with each institution and individual having their own reasons for traveling to Arnhem Land.

Frederick McCarthy (see Plate 3.4 and 3.5 with Frank Setzler), the Australian Museum’s representative, officially saw his aims in the field as the same as Mountford’s.

The opportunity to visit Arnhem Land as a member of this Expedition, and as a museum anthropologist, was accepted eagerly because it presented a wide scope of anthropological research in a great and little known Reserve which is now one of the few remaining areas in Australia where the real nomadic life of the Australian aborigines can be studied first-hand. Here, we believed, could be seen being made and used some of the fascinating ritual and utilitarian objects exhibited in our museums. Moreover, we would have an opportunity to study the physique, character and social life of the native people of Arnhem Land (McCarthy n.d.a: 1).

The Australian Museum had similar reasons for releasing McCarthy for six months (later extended) with full pay.

Release of Mr. McCarthy for this purpose would ultimately be of great value to this museum. The field experience and the contact with the natives would be very valuable to him in his anthropological work, and there is no doubt that the museum collections would benefit greatly as a result of his field work in a region where such field work is not often possible (Walkom 19.1.48: 1)
Plate 3.4: McCarthy and Kumbiala during AASEAL (NGS Dec. 1949:782)
Plate 3.5: Fred McCarthy (right) with Frank Setzler in camp on Winchelsea Island during AASEAL (Attenbrow and Khan, in Sullivan et al 1994: 10)
While the collection of ethnological specimens was also undeniably one of the primary reasons McCarthy was in attendance he was also interested in recording manufacturing techniques and uses (McCarthy n.d.a: 2).

The Australian Museum also had Professor A.P. Elkin, Chairman of the Scientific and Publication Committee of the Trustees, looking extremely favorably upon McCarthy’s inclusion and offering to assist the museum with any anthropological matters while McCarthy was in the field (Walkom 19.1.48: 1).

Probably the most important contributor to AASEAL was the Commonwealth Government of Australia. As mentioned previously, different departments offered a variety of assistance to the expedition including transport, food and equipment. Mountford was sent to the United States in 1945 on the advice of Arthur Calwell, a man who had more influence on this expedition than any other individual bar Mountford. Calwell was the Minister for Information whose primary motive was to gain favorable publicity for Australia. The Commonwealth Government was keen to continue its good relations with the United States following World War Two and to ensure continued military support (Elliott 1992: 4; Lamshed 1972: 187). As Mountford (23.1.47: 1) stated to Alexander Wetmore, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution:

> My minister is very pleased that the Smithsonian Institution is willing to pool its scientific resources and knowledge with that of our own in the study of a little known part of Australia, and is anxious to show how much this expedition will do towards establishing scientific co-operation and a stronger feeling of good will.

In reply, the Smithsonian Institution was also keen to improve relations (primarily scientific relations) between their institution, the American Government and the Australian Government. This is shown in the following letters written by Dr. Alexander Wetmore:

> We look forward with keen interest to this work, particularly to the close association that it brings between representatives of our two governments. We may, I trust, consider this a beginning to an even closer cooperation in future scientific matters than has existed heretofore (Wetmore 3.12.47: 2).
Let me say that I regard this present trip as one of great importance in furthering friendly relations between scientists and government officers in Australia with the Smithsonian Institution. We must do everything that we can to promote the welfare of the work and the relationships that should exist between the Smithsonian and Australian workers. These, for various reasons, have been more tenuous in the past than I have liked (Wetmore 9.7.48: 1).

In 1947, the Smithsonian Institution unexpectedly needed staff intended for AASEAL for “commitments in connection with the Bikini tests” (Calwell 28.2.47:1). The postponement of AASEAL for one year was the direct result of the Commonwealth Government of Australia’s desire for larger numbers to promote publicity. As Mountford (28.1.47: 1; 23.1.47: 1) wrote to Grosvenor and Wetmore:

When Dr. Wetmore was able to send only two land naturalists, my minister considered that the reduced number and scope of the American staff was insufficient a basis for the publicity he desired to give the expedition, and therefore suggested its postponement until next year.

When you were able to send only land naturalists, and no one to study either the sea, or the aborigines, Mr. Calwell considered the reduced staff to be an insufficient basis for the publicity he desired to give the expedition, thus the postponement.

In a private letter to the President of the National Geographic Society dated January 28, 1947, Mountford (Mountford 28.1.47: 1-2) proposed that the objectives of the expedition were to:

- Establish a good neighbour policy and scientific cooperation between the United States of America and Australia.
- Provide publicity for Australia through the publication of three, if not four, illustrated articles in the National Geographic Magazine. (Circulation 1,250,000. Estimated Readers 5,000,000).
- Study and record the aborigine’s pattern of life in relation to the terrestrial and marine fauna and flora.
- Investigate seasonal movements and shelter of the aborigines, and, by examination of their foods determine how well, or otherwise, they are able “live off the land”.

Make a nutritional health survey of the natives and their food as a guide for future administration

Collect and identify the plants, birds, animals and fish in the various environments of Arnhem Land.

Carry out a food fish survey along the coast of Arnhem Land.

Determine the food resources of land and sea as data for future military operations (this was urgently needed, but not available, during the last war).

Produce, for the National Film Board, five coloured cine films on the ethnology and natural history of Arnhem Land.

Others documents suggest that international politics was just as important as science. An example is contained in a letter from the Executive Officer of the Northern Australia Development Committee’s (Fred Rose) to E. Bonney, the Director General of the Department of Information (3.9.47: 1) stating, “I am sure that the results will be invaluable not only from the scientific but also from a more immediate utilitarian point of view”.

The National Geographic Society provided the original sum of money necessary for the expedition to take place, however, they intended a much smaller party. This organisation provided the necessary publicity which caused the Commonwealth Government of Australia to be interested and involved with AASEAL.

With the pooling of the resources of so many Departmental bodies and scientific institutions, this should be the best equipped scientific party ever sent into the field for the study of Australian natural history and ethnology, and should reflect considerable credit on the National Geographic Society, whose name it will bear (Mountford 28.1.47: 3).

The Expedition

After further negotiations, arguments, sickness and delays, including the aforementioned one-year postponement, the first of the expedition members left Adelaide on March 18, 1948 and headed for Darwin (Mountford 1956: xxiii). Time in the field was divided fairly evenly between three main bases in northern Australia, which were chosen for their differences in topography: Umbakumba (Groote Eylandt), Yirrkala and Oenpelli (see Figure 3.1). Other camps visited for shorter periods included Milingimbi Island, Chasm Island and Winchelsea Island. Another camp
was planned on the Roper River, however, due to delays in arriving at their first camp, the Roper River camp was abandoned (Mountford 1956: xxiii; Mountford 1975: 226).

Arrangements had been made for the cooperation of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in transporting the personnel and equipment from Darwin to each camp. It was soon discovered, however, that even the RAAF did not have enough capability to carry the huge load and additional transport had to be arranged. Fortunately for the researchers, a 400-ton, flat-bottomed, wooden barge named Phoenix was made available to carry the excess, and a number of the scientists. An RAAF Catalina flying boat arrived at Umbakumba the day after leaving Darwin and Phoenix arrived five weeks later (Setzler n.d: 3). Setzler (n.d.: 3) stated, “on May 24, the ‘Phoenix’ sailed into Little Lagoon to the cheers of not only the natives, who celebrate whenever a boat arrives, but from the Expedition personnel”.

The delay of Phoenix was considered interesting enough for the National Geographic Society to run an article on its mishaps (Walker 1949: 417-430). Phoenix found itself stranded on a reef along the north coast of Arnhem Land having to wait until high tide to float off (Mountford 1975: 227-228; Setzler to Mountford n.d: 2).

A small island in the Gulf of Carpentaria was chosen as the first site for intensive study (see Figure 3.1). Groote Eylandt was selected because it offered the chance to study an island environment with a generally arid, sandy hinterland in close proximity to the mainland coast (Mountford 1956: xxiii). Camp for the visitors was set up next to the “native settlement” in Umbakumba. This location allowed researchers to become easily acquainted with the Indigenous people through the settlement’s manager Mr. Fred Gray (see Chapter Five; Mountford 1956: xxiii).

Though the early days in Umbakumba were difficult and often dramatic (due primarily to transportation problems), the entire team was eventually united and spent fourteen weeks together on this island. The other scientists came from the fields of ornithology, mammalogy, ichthyology, botany, entomology, biochemistry, medicine and nutrition (Mountford 1956: xi, xxiv-xxv).

Yirrkala, the second camp, is located in the northeast corner of Arnhem Land and was chosen by Mountford because it offered the scientists an opportunity to study life on the coast as well as among eucalyptus forests and fresh-water billabongs (see Figure 3.1). The research group
Figure 3.1: Map showing Umbakumba (Groote Eylandt), Yirrkala, Oenpelli and Milingimbi Island (after Mountford 1949: xxii)
remained at Yirrkala until the middle of September 1948 and was joined during this time by William Harney who acted as their guide (Murphy 15.7.48, in Setzler 18.7.48: 1; Mountford 1949: 745; Mountford 1956: xxvii).

At the end of their two-month stay in Yirrkala, arrangements were made to move their equipment and personnel to Oenpelli, 600 miles away, in a 40-ton steel landing barge, Triumph. As was becoming usual for the expedition, this plan failed (when Triumph’s engines failed) and other means of transport to Oenpelli were necessary. This alternative came from the RAAF, the launch Kuru and a lugger Victory (Mountford 1975: 230).

After a week in Darwin, securing and storing the collected specimens, the group moved to the final base for the expedition. This was Oenpelli, sixty-five kilometres from the sea (see Figure 3.1). This camp had the most difficult conditions for the researchers. As Mountford describes, “in selecting Oenpelli I had estimated that it would be the most spectacular, the most productive and, at the same time, the most uncomfortable of our research camps; all these expectations were fulfilled” (Mountford 1956: xxviii).

The fieldwork component of AASEAL officially came to a conclusion in early November 1948. The barge Triumph transported the collections and the team members back to Darwin along the East Alligator River (Mountford 1956: xxix-xxx).

Results of the Expedition

The results of the expedition could hardly have been richer, from both the standpoints of scientific results and of human companionship. I cannot stress too highly the good fellowship that existed between the members of the party during the eight months we were together (Mountford 1975: 231).

From a collecting point of view the results of the expedition went far beyond Mountford's initial expectations (Mountford 5.12.50: 1). The collections have been outlined in Chapter One and will be analysed in Chapters Seven and Eight. In addition to the physical collections of natural history and ethnological specimens, each scientist had written extensive and detailed notes while in the field (see Chapter Four).
Conclusions
This brief account of the primary undertakings of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition has highlighted the complex task that confronted Charles Mountford as leader. On top of the pressure placed upon the leader from the Commonwealth Government of Australia came the responsibility of pleasing museums in Australian and in the United States, the National Geographic Society and individual members of the team. In a private letter from Wetmore to Setzler (10.8.48: 1) the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute stated, “Mountford’s difficulties are the ones usually found in a country where scientific research is not established as fully as it is with us. Under such circumstances there is usually more jealousy and contention than cooperation. We had plenty of it in the early days here in the United States”. Whether or not this was a fact, the context of AASEAL was highly political and Mountford was the go-between for the necessary institutions, having to please both government and scientists who believed their research was the primary motivation for the expedition. Contrary to their beliefs the motivations were publicity, international relations and increased understanding of the Indigenous people of Arnhem Land for purposes of administration.

The ethnographic collection acquired during AASEAL was an offshoot and a bonus in terms of the aims. The motivation to collect probably came from the individual researchers rather than the institutions to which they answered, however, this will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Five, Seven and Eight. Conveniently, the distribution of this collection could assist in improving relations between the two countries by the Commonwealth Government of Australia offering the United States representative samples.

At one stage, Mr. Siebert, the United States Consul from South Australia, Mr. Murphy, the Deputy Director of Information, and Mr. Driver, the Administrator of the Northern Territory, visited AASEAL and, particularly, Mountford. These men thought the leader was spending too little time on publicity (producing films) and attempted to take leadership away from him leaving him solely in charge of administration and filmmaking. After negotiations, the leader was instead simply barred from carrying out research on the “primitive” art, which he regarded as “a sad blow”. He also commented to Wetmore (29.7.48: 2) that, “you will see my enemies, of whom you have already had some knowledge, are still active and powerful”. Eventually these worries took their toll on Mountford’s health and after numerous fainting spells Setzler (6.10.48: 2) stated, “our main hope now is to hold him down from worry and exhaustion, so that we can all safely return to Darwin”.

These examples of the problems encountered by one of the expedition members are simply to highlight the political nature of AASEAL and the difficult conditions under which the ethnographic collection was obtained. They also illustrate the lack of concern for the Indigenous men and women who were “subjects” of this research. No evidence suggests that the implications for the Indigenous communities were considered at any stage. The next chapter will illustrate the methodologies employed in this study to determine aspects of collection strategies, bias and so forth.
4

Materials and Methodologies

Introduction

Any methods and materials used to reach conclusions regarding a set of data must call upon numerous sources of evidence that together make up a matrix of mutually enabling and constraining strands of evidence (Wylie 1989). Answers to the questions posed by this study were sought through two methods of investigation. The first was examining the primary and secondary historical records while the second consisted of an examination of the artefacts or physical records. The historical sources also assisted in placing the study within an archaeological context and in relation to other archaeological studies of ethnographic collections. These sources, as well as a justification of the essential selections made during this study, will be outlined in this chapter.

The selection of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition Ethnographic Collection

There were four primary reasons why the AASEAL ethnographic collection was chosen for analysis. These were:

- The lack of recent research on AASEAL and, more specifically, its resulting collections,
- To return information to the Indigenous communities visited,
- To add to the body of knowledge concerning collection strategies and their influence on ethnographic collections in Australia and overseas during the 1940s, and
- To aid future research on more specific aspects of the expedition and its collections particularly through the cataloguing of the collection.

The lack of recent research concerning the expedition and its resulting collections

Numerous factors influenced the decision to focus upon AASEAL and the ethnographic collection. The primary motivation was that very little work had been undertaken on any of the historical material or the material culture since the publication of the records of the expedition. No complete catalogue of the ethnographic artefacts had ever been produced prior to this study. Rather, the artefacts were immediately split into smaller collections to be distributed throughout Australia and the United States of America.
The lack of a complete catalogue and subsequent division of the collection has meant that any research occurring on the artefacts has been done using isolated portions of the entire collection. Craig Elliott’s (1992) report on the National Museum of Australia’s AASEAL collection is one example. An abbreviated version of this report was made available to a number of other institutions; however, the National Museum of Australia’s library has restricted access to the full report (see Appendix C).

A great deal, but not all, of the material collected was reproduced and described in the Records of AASEAL (Mountford 1956, 1960; Mountford & Specht 1958; Specht 1964). Libraries and museums holding material from the expedition usually also hold a copy of these records that today are difficult to acquire. The lack of information about the expedition is of concern because of its extended importance, which was discussed in Chapter Three.

The collections commonly represent a large percentage of some institution’s ethnographic material from Arnhem Land (e.g. The National Museum of Australia, the South Australian Museum and the Smithsonian Institution). In the case of the Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution) in Washington, D.C. 339 of their 762 ethnographic artefacts from Australia were acquired during AASEAL (David Rosenthal, Collection Management, Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, pers. comm. 17 July 2000). This represents 45% of their entire Australian ethnographic collection, yet very little research has ever been conducted to supply this and other institutions with contextual information about the materials’ acquisition (Elliott’s 1992 report being the obvious exception). This expedition took place when the collecting of Indigenous cultures in Australia was at its peak and perhaps is most representative of this period. The political, economic, and extended cultural influences behind this collecting were enormous and extremely important for understanding the attitudes of non-Indigenous people in 1940s Australia.

To return information to the Indigenous communities visited

When considering AASEAL, it is clear that an enormous amount of material was acquired from the Indigenous people of Arnhem Land in a relatively short period of time (2144 ethnographic artefacts in nine months). These artefacts were collected during a period when Indigenous people were increasingly living in government-supported, church-run missions, or similar kinds of totalitarian establishments. They were being implicitly and explicitly forced off their land by the
Commonwealth Government of Australia, as well as other non-Indigenous parties interested in their land. The Indigenous people of Australia were, by 1948, introduced to tobacco, alcohol, Western foods, and diseases. The acquisition of Indigenous artefacts was, therefore, undertaken in circumstances when the power relations between collector and indigene were particular unequal. The Indigenous men, women and children offered up their goods, some sacred, to white researchers in exchange for tobacco, food or small amounts of money (see Chapter Five). The collection strategies employed by these researchers will be analysed further in Chapter Five with the aim of providing a clearer understanding of the context of the collection.

The idea of collecting cultures via their artefacts has already been discussed in Chapter Two and will be continued in Chapter Five, yet, it is appropriate here to further explore this theme. The return of information obtained from Indigenous individuals and communities during archaeological and anthropological research is today an essential aspect of ethically responsible practice. It essential that such information is returned both now and retrospectively on behalf of past researchers such as the AASEAL scientists. Though the past wrongs cannot be undone, we can today make attempts to make amends thereby demonstrating the respect from which empowerment grows. Certainly it would initially appear that the primary artefacts of this study, bark paintings, were produced for sale and were, therefore, not sacred. However, recent representatives from the Indigenous communities visited in 1948 have declared a number of the bark paintings sacred. The relationship would, consequently, seem more complex than simply a trade agreement between artists and collectors.

The database produced as part of this project (see Appendix B) that contains information on the archaeological, ethnological and physical anthropological material will be made available to the relevant Indigenous communities, and other ways of returning this information will also be explored through consultation with the appropriate Indigenous communities and institutions.

To add to the body of knowledge concerning collection strategies and their influence on museum collections in Australia and overseas during the 1940s.

The AASEAL ethnographic collection was chosen as the subject for this study of collection strategies in Australia specifically in the period following World War Two. This collection represents a large sample size of 2144 specimens from a specific time period (see Chapter Seven). The collection of 484 bark paintings also represents a complete census from the communities visited (see Chapter Eight). There are numerous forms of documentation that can assist with the
analysis of collection strategies. These include diaries, letters, government reports, films, sound recordings and photographs. Though the collection is distributed all over the world, the potential for its uses (i.e. mission practices, treatment of indigenous people following World War Two and so forth) is enormous. In terms of collection strategies, these sources tell us the thoughts, movements, and ideals of the collectors. In terms of the diaries (Setzler’s diaries are deemed confidential until 2001 by the National Library of Australia) the collectors appear to have given a more human account of the collection (and other) processes. This provides researchers with an alternative to the formal correspondence between researchers and their institutional superiors.

From all these sources, it is expected that enough different sources and types of information can be found which deals with the many different facets of the collection strategies. A bark painting, for example, for which the circumstances of acquisition are not known may be thought to have been produced prior to European contact or prior to contact with the collector when in truth it may have been commissioned, the artist may have been told what to paint and so on. This example is simply to emphasise the significant influence collection strategies may have on any conclusions reached in regard to artefacts and museum collections.

To aid future research on more specific aspects of the expedition and its collections
As mentioned above, this research can assist Indigenous communities as well as researchers in a variety of ways. One specific aspect may be the assistance lent to a study of a specific type of artefact from this expedition. Jones’ (1987) study of the toys from AASEAL is one example. In this case a researcher would not only have the assistance of the database for locating the appropriate artefacts and details regarding the available historical evidence, but also the contextual information with which to make informed commentary regarding the artefacts. As Smith (1989: 80) stated:

> The methods by which material made its way into collections could possibly introduce bias. Donald Thomson, for example, specifically requested Aboriginal artists in Arnhem Land to duplicate body designs onto bark. This meant that many paintings have an artificially plain background: this feature could not, then, be recorded for the paintings from his collection.

This thesis may help other researchers to identify when collection bias such as that mentioned above is significant enough to influence their own study. Those, for example, wishing to study
AASEAL artefacts in museums in the future will have the necessary information available, through this thesis, to be able to determine these controlling factors.

The selection of bark paintings as a focus for this study
The enormity of the expedition itself and the resulting museum collections meant that a decision was necessary regarding the type of study and analysis to be pursued. This has been stated in the Preface to this study. The first choice was a simple general empirical description of the AASEAL collection of 2144 Indigenous artefacts placed into a database and made accessible to the relevant Indigenous communities as well as conditionally to non-Indigenous researchers. Certainly, this would be profitable to people, however, many would argue that this process would fail to add to the body of knowledge. It is for this reason that a specific feasibility study was chosen above a general descriptive thesis.

Bark paintings were initially chosen because they were available in sufficient quantities to assess statistical significance of trends. Even before the cataloguing process began, it was obvious that hundreds of bark paintings were collected and they were, therefore, a major percentage of all the ethnographic material. The choice of bark paintings as the item of analysis for this thesis has also been discussed in the Preface to this study.

Following a general discussion and analysis of the entire collection, bark paintings will be analysed in further detail. The detail in which they will be studied is discussed later in this chapter. The collection strategies employed for this particular artefact will also be analysed in more detail than for the entire collection. This thesis could also be seen as a feasibility study for anyone wishing to undertake an analysis of the entire collection resulting from AASEAL. Naturally, in terms of the historical review, literature review and theoretical assessment all ethnographic artefacts will be included in this study.

The selection of variables for analysis
Difficulties arose in determining aspects of collection strategies, which unambiguously specify for measurement. Ideally, such definitions should be sufficiently precise that all future researchers using the methodology on the same set of data will achieve the same results. Table 4.1 illustrates the operational definitions for this project.

The following selection was capable of statistical analysis:
The total sample of 2144 ethnographic artefacts was subjected to analysis of the distribution and clustering of variables at 6 levels. These were:

- Total number
- Total number by provenance
- Type and number by provenance
- Total number by institution
- Type and number by institution
- Provenance by institution
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<td>Date on which the researcher recorded the specimen</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Other Number</td>
<td>Any other number (such as old catalogue number)</td>
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*Table 4.1: American-Australian Scientific Expedition Collections Database*
Outline of analysis for bark paintings

484 bark paintings were subjected to further analysis that could not be conducted on the total sample. These again included an analysis of the clustering and distribution of variables at 10 levels. These were:

- Total number of bark paintings
- Total number by place of collection
- Total number by institution
- Provenance by institution
- Total number of paintings on paper
- Total number by place of collection
- Total number by institution
- Total number by collector
- Provenance by collector
- Total number accessible

Constraints on the selection of variables

The use of the AASEAL ethnographic collection and, specifically, bark paintings for a study of collection strategies, has three major limitations. These include:

- The missing artefacts from the collections. This limitation is unavoidable and despite every attempt being made to locate the entire collection, 35 artefacts are still missing from this analysis (see Chapter Six).
- The sample size. Though a sample size of 2144 artefacts and, specifically, 484 bark paintings is considerable, it is still acknowledged that a greater number would increase the accuracy of this study.
- Missing voices. The most important limitation of this study is the lack of Indigenous Australian voices. The historical evidence surrounding the expedition is vast; yet, it is limited to the perceptions and experiences of the white researchers. I am aware of any records made by the Indigenous communities visited or the Indigenous individuals involved to date other than the artefacts collected. Certainly, input could be gained today through interviews with surviving elders in the communities, yet, while desirable, this was not feasible for a study of this size.
Outline of the available historical records

It can be seen from the above information that the historical evidence relating to AASEAL and resulting collections varies between institutions holding the artefacts. The Mortlock Library of South Australiana in the State Library of South Australia holds most information relating to the leader of the expedition, including Charles and Bessie Mountford’s diaries.

The Smithsonian Institution Anthropological Archives and the Smithsonian Archives hold numerous boxes of material relating mainly to Frank Setzler, Curator in Archaeology at the Smithsonian Institution and deputy leader of the expedition. These written documents deal mostly with the process of the expedition and the problems. Setzler’s notebooks are also useful for information on archaeological aspects of the expedition. The photographs held by this institution are also important historical sources of which the Indigenous people of Arnhem Land should be aware. These two institutions hold the majority of written evidence relating to this expedition. Other institutions such as the Australian Museum and the National Museum of Australia hold numerous correspondence involving members of AASEAL, yet their information tends to be limited to their representatives. The Queensland Art Gallery also holds information of particular relevance to the distribution of the collection while AIATSIS holds the diaries of Fred McCarthy.

Recording the sample

The following museums and art galleries hold artefacts collected during AASEAL (see also Appendix J):

- The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- The Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
- The Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
- The Australian Museum, Sydney
- The Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- The National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- The National Museum of Australia, Canberra
- The Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- The South Australian Museum, Adelaide
- The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
All of these museums were contacted during this research, however, for practical reasons, only half of the institutions were visited. The five institutions listed below together hold 2048 of the 2144 ethnographic artefacts and, consequently, 96.6% of the collection (see also Appendix J):

- The Art Gallery of South Australia
- The Australian Museum
- The Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution
- The National Museum of Australia
- The South Australian Museum

For all ten institutions, the variables selected and discussed earlier in this chapter were recorded. At the five institutions visited, further variables selected for the bark paintings were also recorded. Photographs were taken in colour and black and white of the bark paintings (excluding those classified as secret/sacred) held in the South Australian Museum, the Smithsonian Institution and the Australian Museum. All of the information gained on the artefacts was entered into a Microsoft Access relational database prepared for this research (see Appendix B).

Conclusions
This chapter has emphasised the importance of historical records in this research. Primary data, augmented by secondary evidence, has assisted in finding a context of collection for the AASEAL ethnographic collection. These two methods of investigation, historical and physical, were employed in the institutions visited. This chapter has outlined the processes by which choices were made in this study of an ethnographic collection and, specifically, this study of bark paintings. The reasons for collections from AASEAL being focused upon are discussed as well as the benefits such a study can bring to various communities. An understanding of the processes involved in reaching conclusions concerning data is necessary in any archaeological research and analysis. The following chapter shows the results of this historical research in terms of activities before, during and after the 1948 Expedition.
The Shaping of an Ethnographic Collection

Collections suppress their own historical, economic and political processes of production (Griffiths 1996: 25).

Introduction

This chapter will explain the processes involved in the initial shaping of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition ethnographic collection and the contemporary social attitudes that contributed to the collection practices of the individuals. In other words, this is a mid-twentieth century study of ideas in Western society leading to the actual undertaking of collecting in the field. While it could be argued that individuality was the primary influence on collection, the influence of society and culture on the views of these individuals cannot be ignored. Individuals were carrying mandates from their government and were, in essence, collecting for white society in general. Collecting from other cultures is a universal phenomenon not only for colonisers collecting from Indigenous groups but also for Indigenous groups collecting from colonisers. This study is concerned with the former; yet, it could just as easily be reversed.

Misunderstanding how an artefact was acquired can have a huge effect on any conclusions reached regarding the collected material. To use the example of a painting it would seem essential to know whether this piece of art existed before the collector arrived or whether it was commissioned on arrival and, thus, determine the influence of the collector on the art.

Collecting in Northern Australia

What practical effect did the views discussed in Chapter Two of thesis, regarding the overall phenomenon of collecting, have on the formation of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition ethnographic collection?

In Australia, early researchers often collected contemporary ethnographic material culture from Indigenous communities with a Social Darwinist view. They believed these cultures (or culture, as they believed at the time) represented an earlier form of human culture. In line with this view until the 1950s, researchers of Australian Indigenous culture generally collected with the underlying assumption that their study group was an unchanging people with unchanging material culture
As Murdoch (in Attwood & Arnold 1992: x) stated in 1917, “the dark-skinned wandering tribes… have nothing that can be called a history… change and progress are the stuff of which history is made: these blacks knew no change and made no progress, as far as we can tell”.

This meant that ethnographic collections were formed and used for studying from what were assumed to be static, prehistoric cultures. Researchers saw this ethnographic material as providing them with the absent data in the archaeological record. In other words, it was believed that the gap resulting from perishable material not surviving in the archaeological record could be filled with modern ethnographic material (McBryde 1978). Though the question of Australia’s static culture prior to European colonisation was called into question by researchers such as Tindale in Southern Australia, interest in cultural change and regional variation did not mark Australian archaeology until the 1950s, particularly following the advent of radio carbon dating (Renfrew & Bahn 1996: 132; Trigger 1995: 143).

Gould (1980: 1) stated that, “for several years it has been fashionable among prehistorians to refer to archaeology as ‘fossilised human behaviour’”. He was wondering whether the application of deductive arguments to archaeological evidence in order to discover how human beings in different prehistoric societies behaved in the past was a realistic and appropriate method (Gould 1980: 1). He also acknowledged that anybody outside the archaeological community would laugh at this presumptuous idea, as it is clear that the ravages of weather affect the perishable material in these communities. When recognition that material remains account for only a small part of any human behaviour is added to this, the problem seems, “insurmountable”. Naturally other problems with deductive arguments, in this context, could be discussed such as the reliability of behavioural interpretations (Gould 1980: 1).

With colonisation and the destructive impact that this had upon Indigenous cultures worldwide, people began to see Darwin’s predictions as becoming fact (Darwin 1871: 521). Though at first the devastation of other cultures was accepted as progress, eventually fear of losing something irreplaceable (i.e. a view of the past) began to enter the minds of the colonisers. Simpson (1951: 186) described the Australian Aboriginal as “a patient who years ago was marked down as ‘dying’ and whose treatment since has consisted mainly of pillow-smoothing and doses of pity”.

This fear led to an urgency in recording and preserving and was the overwhelming motivating factor in the collection of Indigenous material culture in Australia during the early to mid-twentieth
century and possibly extending further (Clifford 1988: 231; Griffiths 1996: 26; Tuhiiwai Smith 1999: 61). Not only was there a compelling need to collect and record material culture before cultures were lost but also before they changed through the influence of colonising cultures. Many researchers and collectors in Australia, including Mountford, considered their work as salvage (Clifford 1988: 218, 220, 231, 234, & 236; Elkin 1964: 362; Griffiths 1996: 25).

Evidence of Mountford’s anxiousness to collect and record can be found primarily in his funding applications during the 1930s and 1940s including his 1945 application to the National Geographic Society. He speaks of his fear of the disappearance or change of aspects of Indigenous culture caused by European colonisation, “this art is disappearing rapidly, thus the urgency to gather all details of the drawings, their significance and their relationship to the legendary stories” (Mountford 5.3.45: 3).

Arnhem Land is an aboriginal reserve, and before the war, except for a few missions along the coast, was uninhabited by Europeans. The native culture was not, at that time, influenced by white civilisation; it is unlikely that the present military occupation has changed them (Mountford 5.3.45: 3).

Contrary to Mountford’s belief, Clarke (1998: 13) has stated that, “in reality, by 1948 Arnhem Land had become far less isolated, due to the large numbers of soldiers and airmen stationed there during World War II and through the establishment, since the early 1900s, of missions located around the coastline”. Dewar (1995: 22) has also emphasised contact in the 1920s with Japanese trepanging crews who would frequently barter alcohol, tobacco, steel and other commodities for the sexual services of the Yolngu women.

During the expedition McCarthy expressed concern at the situation in which he found himself stating, “I went to bed at 9pm but, though tired out, couldn’t sleep because of our situation. Here we are, 16 of us, backed by the U.S. and Australian funds, but the natives are almost completely civilised, speaking English well and have dropped their ceremonial, hunting life” (McCarthy Diary One 14.4.48). He was also concerned about Mountford’s choice of base camps and his inability to work with nomadic aborigines living in their “normal” environment but, in response, he saw the opportunity for studying culture-contact;
The choice of such centres as base camps, instead of localities where aborigines were living entirely by their individual efforts off the land, meant that valuable opportunities were lost to study their so-called primitive culture, and to collect the products of their handicrafts in actual use (McCarthy n.d.a: 2).

Even before reaching Arnhem Land, Setzler suspected similar “problems” to those of McCarthy, fearing the Indigenous cultures had already been polluted by the west and, therefore, were of no use to the researchers. He commented in a letter to Mountford, “In a recent article in Oceania I noticed that the natives around Army camps had taken to card playing. These natives may be so Europeanized that we would not be using them” (Setzler 31.9.47: 1).

With this background, it is hoped that the following information regarding the act of collecting by the researchers on AASEAL will be seen not only in the practical sense that it is applied, but also in a wider sense of society, imperialism, Social Darwinism, and human nature.

The Pre-developed Collection Strategies of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition
It is a little surprising to find that no stated collection policy concerning ethnographic material culture was established before the expedition members left for Arnhem Land. Essentially, any decisions on what to collect were the domain of individual members of the expedition. More specifically, it was the domain of Charles Mountford, Frederick McCarthy and Frank Setzler who were concerned with anthropology and archaeology. These individuals were working out of the South Australian Museum, the Australian Museum and the Smithsonian Institution respectively. McCarthy and Setzler’s position and role in these museums was generally similar. Mountford, on the other hand, had ties to the South Australian Museum, as well as the Australian Government, which complicated the collection process for him. Elliott (1992: 10) stated that Margaret MacArthur (see Plate 5.2) working for the Australian Institute of Anatomy as a nutritionist collected some utilitarian objects, however, no records were found during this study to confirm this idea (Elliott 1992: 10; Mountford 1956: xi).
Plate 5.2: Margaret McArthur weighing food collected by women during AASEAL (Mountford Dec. 1949: 766)
Before beginning their expedition to Arnhem Land, very little correspondence was entered into between any of the participating institutions regarding the collection of ethnographic artefacts.

I did not mention anything about collections, because it might complicate matters, but you can take my personal assurance as leader that your museum will receive a representative series of all ethnological material collected (Mountford 31.12.47: 1).

Elliott (1992) stated that this lack of correspondence is due to Mountford’s avoidance of the issue, yet, although he certainly did not encourage discussion, no evidence that he thwarted discussion has been located during this study.

Mr. Setzler will arrange with you in Australia some division of the anthropological material under which he will bring a part to this country for the National Museum [of Australia], while the rest will remain with you in Australia. This embodies the substance of memoranda that I have given you previously. We are proceeding on the understanding that this is acceptable to you and to the Australian authorities. As you and I have informed one another earlier these matters should all be clarified in advance so that there will be no misunderstanding at the end of the trip (Wetmore 15.1.48: 1-2).

Mountford (31.12.47: 1) gave vague promises to the authorities that the material being split among the primary institutions, yet, no questions were asked regarding exactly what the “material” would consist of. The primary and official collectors went into the field with their own ideas on what their institutions needed and what they would try to collect.

McCarthy came to Arnhem Land with the aim of filling gaps in the few existing collections of Indigenous Australian material culture held by the Australian Museum, as well as to collect and document those objects that the expedition members observed were being made or used (Jones 1987: 12). Despite his intentions to fill gaps in the collections at the Australian Museum, he soon came to realise the many restricting factors on his work that were obvious in the field (Jones 1987: 12). He saw the presence of three anthropologists on the expedition as limiting each other’s scope even though it added to the overall anthropological data (McCarthy n.d.b: 1). To resolve this difficulty he chose to specialise and selected those aspects of anthropological research and
collecting that offered the most productive results in the comparatively limited time spent in each of the three base camps (McCarthy n.d.a: 1). His collection of approximately 193 string figures from Yirrkala is an example of these actions.

Though it is known that he meant to specialise in the field, it is not known exactly what his specialties were intended to be. It would be safe to assume that he intended to focus his collecting as well as his research. Mountford’s vague promises before and during the expedition of a clean split of the ethnographic material meant that the Australian Museum would receive artefacts collected by other researchers as well as McCarthy and, consequently, he had no reason to fear having only a limited representation of what he collected. As the anthropologist stated, “I want to work on a set plan without interference so that I can complete some lines of work and not get a confused picture of a tangled skin of work… We have only a small time in each camp… and we have got to specialise to succeed” (McCarthy 18.3.48).

Setzler had less of an understanding of the Indigenous cultures of Arnhem Land and, consequently, came to communities not knowing the situation in which he would find himself.

Never having been in “the land down under” I am indeed looking forward to this opportunity. My colleagues here in the museum are also anxious to start work in this relatively unknown section of Australia.

As an anthropologist I have kept posted in a general way with the various Australian reports on the aborigines (Setzler 1.9.47: 1).

Setzler (21.12.48: 1) lamented that, “we [the Smithsonian Institution] have never had a truly representative series of Australian anthropological specimens”. As his institution’s collection of Indigenous Australian material was limited before he travelled, his understanding of the material culture of Arnhem Land may also have been limited. McCarthy’s statement following the expedition would seem to support this fact. He states, “Arnhem Land was selected because the museums of Australia and America possess few specimens from this remote region” (McCarthy 16.1.49).

It appears that Setzler had very little idea of what material to collect in Arnhem Land before his arrival, whereas McCarthy knew the material culture being used by the Indigenous people in Arnhem Land and, hence, had a general idea of the material with which he would return.
On the other hand, Mountford appears to have had a good knowledge of what he was going to collect in Arnhem Land. The ethnologist had previously visited the Roper River area in the early 1940s and collected material culture, particularly bark paintings (Lamshed 1972: 107-108). McCarthy stated in his diary on one of the first days at Umbakumba that, “Monty wants to do art and legends, and to get a collection” (McCarthy 18.3.48). Many months later the same anthropologist had changed his view considerably; “He [Mountford] is not really concerned whether we get a collection or not so long as he gets a private collection of bark paintings which, I believe, he wants for the purpose of exhibitions and lectures in the United States” (McCarthy 8.8.48).

The reasons for Mountford wanting this material require further discussion. His intentions for the material are one factor that certainly could have influenced his intended collecting, yet these intentions are not entirely clear. He stated, “I would desire that the ethnological material collected on this expedition be lodged in the South Australian Museum, where it will be available for study” (Mountford 5.3.45: 6).

Despite these proclamations to the National Geographic Society, in the field his intentions became clearer. Mountford did intend for a large part of the ethnographic material collected to go to the South Australian Museum, however, McCarthy believed that he intended to sell it to them. The destination of the money realised from the proposed purchase is unknown (McCarthy 9.4.48; McCarthy 18.3.48).

We had a talk about the ethno. [ethnographic] coll. [collection] Monty wants it split into three batches for Adelaide, Sydney and Washington, but this means that Australia gets 2/3 and the U.S. 1/3, Adelaide buys from Mountford his third altho [although] it contributes no funds or salary to the expedition, and there is some doubt about where the money Mountford receives goes (McCarthy 18.3.48).

Though it would appear that Mountford’s intention was always to collect ethnographic material, particularly bark paintings, his intentions for this material were not what contemporary researchers such as McCarthy would have considered appropriate. It would be difficult to dismiss that these intentions had a large affect on what he collected. Bark paintings, for example, would most certainly sell for larger amounts of money than other, less “aesthetically pleasing”
ethnographic material. Elliott (1992: 10) stated that Mountford was also more willing to trade tobacco or money for bark paintings, carvings, painted paddles, bark coffins, spears and ceremonial objects.

Another influencing factor on Mountford’s collection strategies was his belief that artistic expression could be studied independently of social organisation, a view scorned by his colleagues (Elliott 1992: 7). He once lamented that:

> It was the scientist rather than the painter who studied “primitive art” and therefore approached the subject intellectually rather than emotionally… The designs are analysed, compared, their sequences ascertained, and their ages estimated. But in such painstaking investigations one finds little appreciation of beauty, of balance in colour and form, or of appeal to the senses (Mountford, in Cant 1950: introduction).

This meant that he entered the field collecting art and feeling entirely justified in ignoring the social structures by which it was surrounded. In other words, he could spend his nine months collecting, and research only on return to Adelaide. Mountford collected bark paintings as art rather than artefact during a time when Indigenous art was seen to reside more correctly within the precinct of orthodox anthropology (see Chapters Seven and Eight; Neale 1998: 210). A discussion of the actual dispersion of the ethnographic material will follow in Chapter Six.

**Acquiring the Collection**

The process of selection lies at the heart of collecting, and as we shall see, the act of collecting is not simple; it involves both a view of inherited social ideas of the value which should (or should not) be attached to a particular object and which derive from the modern narratives… and impulses which lie at the deepest level of individual personality (Pearce 1992: 7).

As no contract about the division of the collections existed, collecting in the field became difficult and competitive (see Chapter Three; Jones 1987: 13). At the heart of these difficulties was suspicion. Two months into the expedition Mountford and McCarthy discussed the collection of bark paintings and the leader’s suspicions. “I had a long discussion with Mountford in which I
forced the issue regarding the number of bark ptgs [paintings], which he had limited to 15, that I was to get, and cleared the air regarding his suspicions about Elkin. It ended favorably for me and now I can have as many ptgs [paintings] as opportunity permits. I have 22 to date” (McCarthy 19.5.48). McCarthy recorded in his diary just two days before this meeting that, “the artists continue to produce up to five bark paintings a day and my series is looking very promising” (McCarthy 17.5.48).

Mountford suspected that McCarthy, a former student of Elkin, was spying for the anthropologist and had been specially selected by him for the expedition. He states early in his diaries that, “It is certain that Elkin recommended this chap [McCarthy], then persuaded Moy [Mr. Moy] to send him and writhe (sic) me. The levities (sic) will then be able to keep Elkin informed about the party” (M-S, V.76: 19). There is no evidence to suggest that this was the case. Mountford also knew that Coates (a native affairs officer) had been suggested by Elkin. “I called to see Mr. Huthmance, the chief Secretary, who is acting Administrator, and found out that Coates had been recommended by Elkin” (M-S, V.76: 17). While Mountford was wrong about McCarthy, Coates was, in fact, reporting to Elkin on the undertaking of the expedition and particularly Mountford’s research (Elliott 1992: 5).

At a meeting held between Mountford, McCarthy and Setzler on April 11th of 1948, the three discussed plans for their work over the future months. It was stated that Mountford would concentrate on art and legends, Setzler would focus on archaeology, physical anthropology and collecting material culture, while McCarthy would be concerned with archaeology, collecting material culture, food and calendar issues, art and string figures (McCarthy 11.4.48). Naturally, from this list many aspects overlapped, causing problems in the future regarding publication (see Appendix E).

The collection strategy employed by Mountford at Groote Eylandt and the other two base camps was to establish a tent (nicknamed the “shop”) for the Indigenous people to bring goods they wanted to trade (see Plate 5.2).
Plate 5.3: Mountford collecting an interpretation of a bark painting from unknown Indigenous men during AASEAL (Mountford 1949: 759)
what he paid them. But he also got interpretations of them from the people (McCarthy, in Elliott 1992: 88).

McCarthy’s diaries state that 10/- to 1 pound was paid for each bark painting, 4/- to 10/- for spears, 5/- to 10/- for baskets, 10/- to 15/- for mats and painted skulls cost 1 pound each (McCarthy 8.8.48). Written by Setzler (Negative Number 64) on a photograph from AASEAL is the statement, “painted skulls from Milingimbi Island purchased from the natives”.

“The bark paintings in the expedition collection, and, in fact, most of those housed in the various universities and museums, have never been part of a wet-weather shelter, but have been made at the request of the investigator” (Mountford 1956: 8). Not only did Mountford request the Indigenous artists to produce bark paintings but on more than one occasion it is recorded that he suggested topics for the artists to paint. The first painting Mountford collected, for example, was commissioned, “I suggested that he [Minimini] makes the first drawing that of the south-east wind mamarika (mamari:k)” (M-S, V.76: 176). In May the ethnologist recorded that, “today, I asked for bark drawings dealing with astronomy, spirit children and gurumuka, the spirit of the dead. They were certainly tough subjects, but brought some interesting results” (M-S, V.76: 274). He was here speaking to Tatalana who misunderstood Mountford’s request and painted something quite different annoying the collector.

Other examples of commissioned works include Nanawanda being asked to draw the spirit children and after two days producing a bark painting depicting a man, his wife and family. Mountford described this as, “a most decorative sheet, but of little value for a greater knowledge of the origin of the spirit children” (M-S, V.76: 274). Mountford (1956: 13) stated, “the method which I adopted was to ask the men to make bark paintings for me, seldom suggesting a subject”. His own diaries would seem to deny this fact.

To assist in collection and filming, Mountford negotiated to have ceremonies, including the Arawaltja ceremony, held near to their base camp. He negotiated this by offering to supply food to the participants. This also pleased the missionaries who objected to people leaving for the ceremonies (M-S, V.77: 387). Earlier in Mountford’s fieldwork career are recorded some of his attitudes towards the people that he was studying. One aspect relevant to collection strategies was his discovery that by handing out rations, he maximised the assistance that could be gained. In 1940, for example, at the Granites in the Tanami Desert, he, “again had charge of feeding the
Aborigines… the chore gave him a chance to win over the women with tidbits, so that they were persuaded to discard their filthy Western garments… when he wanted them to pose for standard photographs” (Lamshed 1972: 53). During the same year, Mountford berated a group of Indigenous men and women for walking across the area he was filming wearing clothes (Lamshed 1972: 107).

Setzler concentrated on archaeology more than any other field, “we… took advantage of every opportunity to examine and if possible excavate carefully as many sites as possible” (McCarthy & Setzler, in Mountford 1960: 216). His excavations, often with the assistance of McCarthy and Indigenous men, emerged with numerous artefacts and human remains (see Plate 5.3). Individual pieces of human bone numbered 241 and were collected or excavated by Setzler and McCarthy.

In addition to the human remains, Setzler took eight plaster casts of men and women from the Umbakumba community using the Negaocol technique (Plate 5.4). Two casts were of hands while six were of faces (Setzler n.d: 1; see Appendix F). Setzler’s role on Groote Eylandt was also to take palm and finger prints of over one hundred people (with the assistance of Bessie Mountford), test the taste buds of sixty families, collect hair samples, photograph the people, collect and study their material culture, make biological reports on their activities and take soil samples for pharmaceutical companies (Setzler n.d: 2).

Setzler and McCarthy again collaborated to collect ethnographic artefacts on Milingimbi Island. After they had finished their archaeological work for the day, the two men’s tents became a “shop” similar to Mountford’s, and Indigenous men and women were able to bring in their materials for trade. It is not recorded whether, like Mountford, they paid cash for the material, but rather it appears they traded tobacco, razor blades, combs and mirrors to obtain 191 ethnological specimens including bark paintings. They were popular and people came from more distant places such as Cape Stewart on the mainland to trade their goods (Setzler 28.8.48: 2). McCarthy (n.d.a.: 8) recorded that the people were eager to trade and this is reflected in the number of artefacts they were able to obtain over a three-week period.

*After our excavations… we would return to our abode to find several Milingimbi natives and sometimes those from the mainland, such as Cape Stewart, waiting to barter their implements, baskets, even their highly prized ceremonial objects, for that dark brown stick of tobacco.*
Plate 5.3: McCarthy (left) and Setzler excavating a rock shelter near Oenpelli during AASEAL (Mountford 1949: 776)
Plate 5.4: Setzler making a plaster cast of Kalpitja using the Negaocol technique (Mountford 1949: 761)
As the allotted period of three weeks came to a close our house looked like a museum store room (Setzler n.d: 6).

At Milingimbi, Reverend Hannah and later Reverend Ellemor assisted the researchers. Reverend Ellemor assisted by obtaining what Setzler and McCarthy did not have time to collect or record. He collected interpretations of designs and carved pipes for the pair (Ellemor 21.6.49: 1). While Setzler and McCarthy were visiting Milingimbi, Mountford arranged for Reverend Ellemor to collect a number of bark paintings for his own collection (Mountford 1956: 267). This was an interesting arrangement considering men from his expedition were on the island collecting anyway. It may reflect that the individuals were collecting, at that stage, for their own institutions and, hence, the competition for bark paintings. Another consequence of this arrangement was that a missionary with different biases and experience was given the task of acquiring interpretations of these paintings from the Indigenous community.

On Groote Eylandt, Fred Gray assisted members of AASEAL. Gray worked as a trepang fisherman around the coast of Arnhem Land before establishing a “native settlement” at Umbakumba (see Plate 5.5). He originally wanted the Christian Missionary Society, who had the lease on the area, to oversee interaction between the men from the Flying Boat Base and the local people stating that “there is definite contact between the aboriginals [sic] and the men from the Base and the position… in my opinion is unsatisfactory” (Gray 24.8.38, in Dewar 1995: 82). When the church announced they could not afford to staff the area for two years, Gray considered this inadequate and applied for permission to take up residence. With the support of the Christian Missionary Society and the Flying Boat Base, Gray established the Umbakumba settlement. Though it was run almost the same as a mission, Gray was criticised for exploiting the Indigenous people who had no concept of money and were paid in kind with food, tobacco and cloth (Dewar 1995: 82-84; Rose 1968: 135). The joining of the expedition with Gray’s settlement proved to be practical as payment scales for artefacts and for work were already set (Elliott 1992: 88).

During the expedition’s eight-week stay at Yirrkala, Mountford, with the assistance of McCarthy and Setzler, continued to collect bark paintings but also concentrated on carved animals and human figures (Mountford 1956: 111). Once the supply of bark for painting was exhausted at Yirrkala and Oenpelli, Mountford (1956: 13) supplied the artists with sheets of rough-surfaced dark grey and green paper (see Chapter Eight).
Plate 5.5: Fred Gray on the Northam 1932. Gray was a trepang fisherman and founder of the Umbakumba "native settlement"

(Dewar 1995: 39)
On my first visit to Oenpelli in 1948 many of the artists who produced bark paintings for me came from the Liverpool River country, the local mission station using most of the available aboriginal labour for the killing and skinning of water buffaloes (Mountford 1956: 111).

In terms of collection strategies, the wording of the above statement is important. In one sense it could be argued that the sentence, “many of the artists who produced bark paintings for me came from the Liverpool River country”, reveals the artists came with intent of producing barks for Mountford (Mountford 1956: 111). This, in turn, suggests that they did not bring bark paintings with them but rather produced them for Mountford on arrival in Oenpelli. This agrees with the collection practices employed by Mountford in the other two base camps and lends weight to the argument that the artists were painting to please the purchaser. This does not, however, suggest he influenced the content of the paintings as discussed earlier.

Some of the other ethnological material collected by Setzler on the mainland included traditional weapons and hunting implements. McCarthy’s focus, on the other hand, was upon domestic objects, as well as the traditional weapons and hunting implements. He also collected canoes, musical instruments, coffins, burial objects, and string figures (see Chapter Seven).

**Discussion**

The collection strategies employed by the expedition members tended to be determined primarily by the individual and once determined were employed at each location in very similar ways. Mountford’s collection of bark paintings usually involved a discussion with the artist concerning the subject of the artwork, two days for the artist to complete his (there are no records suggesting women painted for Mountford) work, another discussion between collector and artist regarding an interpretation of the design and payment of approximately 10/- to 1 pound depending on the standard and size of the work. Setzler and McCarthy, on the other hand, had no dealings with the artist before the purchasing of the art works. They are not recorded to have paid cash for any items but rather, traded tobacco, razor blades and so on.

Other ethnographic material collected by the expedition members is generally not thought to have been commissioned but rather it was purchased (by Mountford) or traded (by McCarthy and Setzler). It is unclear from the historical records as to whether McCarthy paid or traded materials for his collection of string figures. It is doubtful that he would not have compensated his
Indigenous informants after arguing with Setzler that they must be, “given some reasonable value for the great amount of work involved” in producing other artefacts (McCarthy 8.8.48).

The question was posed early in this chapter, as to what motivated these men and women to collect specimens of another culture? There are two separate issues that need to be dealt with when discussing the answer to this question. The first is the motivation of the sponsors including the institutions, which sent their staff; and the second is the individual’s role. As Peace (1992: 7) stated:

Museum objects are created by the act of collecting, usually twice over - firstly through the choices of the individual collector, and secondly, by the willingness of a museum to take the collected assemblage for reasons which have to do with its perceived aesthetic, historic or scientific value.

The museums that sent their anthropological and archaeological staff to join AASEAL (the Australian Museum and the Smithsonian Institution) did so because of their desire to gain a more extensive collection of Indigenous Australian material culture. The expedition also offered the rare opportunity of training in the field for their staff. The Smithsonian Institution was also keen to improve relations between Australian and American scientists. For all these institutions there was also the appeal of gaining a collection and this deserves some further discussion.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Social Darwinism led to an evolutionary ladder on which the bottom rungs (generally the Indigenous cultures) would be overwhelmed by the upper rungs (the Europeans). Stemming from these ideas was a sense a sense of urgency to record these “dying races” and to “save” the tangible evidence of these cultures. As Griffith’s (1996: 26) stated, “anthropology in Australia was driven by the expectation of Aboriginal extinction and by the urgency of preserving the records of a dying race”. Even though the institutions and their researchers may not have totally believed that Indigenous Australian’s were “a dying race”, all probably believed that these cultures were in decline due to outside influence. It is certainly possible, therefore, that these institutions primarily desired to gain better, larger and more representative collections of material from Arnhem Land because they feared the opportunity to collect would soon be gone.
Complications in using the “urgency” argument arise when the influence of the actual collector’s individuality is discussed. In this case, McCarthy, Setzler and Mountford. Though McCarthy’s and Setzler’s views on the idea of “a dying race” are not clear from the surviving evidence, it is understood that they were upset at the changes in Indigenous culture (changes stemming from contact with colonising cultures). Setzler saw this as disappointing and unfortunate in terms of research, while McCarthy expressed some disappointment in the changes that he too observed, but he also expressed excitement at the possibility of studying culture-contact.

Mountford’s disappointment in the non-traditional lifestyle of his “study group” was less obvious than the other researchers. The reasons why these three men, in particular, were interested in studying another culture and, consequently, collecting specimens, falls back to an earlier discussion in this chapter. The Social Darwinist idea of those higher up on the evolutionary ladder looking down and viewing the lower rungs as their past is certainly one idea that may be relevant.

Nevertheless, the contribution of Mountford to the undertaking of collection needs to be remembered. As Muensterberger (1994: 4) stated:

> It is, of course, a given that whatever is collected is particularly significant to the individual collector. Obviously, his collection is bound to reflect certain aspects of his own personality, his taste, his sophistication or naiveté; his independence of choice or his reliance on the judgment of others.

As discussed above, the ethnologist also had other reasons for wanting to collect, and particularly for wanting to collect bark paintings. There is little doubt that Mountford desired to attain a large collection of ethnographic material to assist in his personnel research ventures (including display on lecture tours). It is also likely that he intended to sell and trade artefacts. Certainly, these ideas can be connected to the idea of preserving the records of a “dying race”, but they also reflected his personal ambitions.

**Conclusions**

The very act of collecting has a political or ideological or aesthetic dimension which cannot be overlooked (Vergo 1989: 2).
Though it may seem that the AASEAL ethnographic collection was formed by the individuals, it would be naïve to think that the views of the European culture from which these individuals came, did not influence their choices. Certainly, the needs of the individual and each individual’s employer were determining factors in the collections, but the underlying influences of western culture were probably more dominant. The influence of Social Darwinism meant that these researchers came to Arnhem Land with certain beliefs affecting their work. The belief that the cultures they were studying were soon to be lost, imbued the collection of material culture with a sense of urgency.
The Changing Nature of an Ethnographic Collection

The crucial idea is that of selection, and it is the act of selection which turns a part of the natural world into an object and a museum piece (Pearce 1992: 5).

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the events surrounding the distribution of the ethnographic collection formed during the American-Australian Scientific Expedition. References will also be made, where necessary, to the archaeological and physical anthropological collections. Mountford stated that “the results of the expedition could hardly have been richer, both from the standpoint of human companionship and scientific results” (Mountford 1956: xxx). These scientific results to which Mountford refers included the collection of 2144 ethnographic artefacts (see Chapter Seven). As discussed in Chapter Five, no decision was made concerning the division of the ethnographic collection prior to the expedition leaving. This led to confusion, competition and arguments in the field and also on the expedition’s return. The distribution of the artefacts was influenced by all of these factors and others, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Considering the number of researchers involved and the different institutions sponsoring the expedition, it is not surprising that the collections were broken up and distributed to numerous locations, not only around Australia, but also the United States.

The Ethnographic Collection

A total of 3547 artefacts including 1160 archaeological artefacts (see Appendices A and E), 2144 ethnographic artefacts and 241 individual human remains (see Appendices A and F) were excavated and collected during AASEAL. Of the ethnographic material collected, 484 or 22.6% were bark paintings, as well as 198 spears, 198 armlets, 193 string figures, 132 pieces of worked stone, 118 baskets, 99 figurines and 71 paintings on paper. Other smaller collections of ethnographic material included spearthrowers, paddles, message sticks, dolls, shells, pipes, containers, didgeridoos, belts and so forth (see Chapter Seven).
This collection of material culture was one of the largest dating from the early to mid-twentieth century (see Chapter Eight). The 1940s have particularly been singled out as the high point in the collection of artefacts, particularly bark paintings, from Arnhem Land (Brittain 1990: 7). Such a large number of artefacts stemming from a relatively short period of time would certainly be worthy of note, especially if kept as one collection. If this had occurred, however, this study would be significantly shorter. The distribution of the AASEAL ethnographic collection is one of the primary influences (with selection of artefacts and so forth) on the institutional collections that today hold this material. From historical research it was possible to determine the movements of the collection following the 1948 expedition and, hence, determine, what could be labeled, the “second round” of collecting.

The Dispersal of the Ethnographic Collection
Mountford (5.3.45: 6) stated that he “would desire that the ethnological material collected on this expedition be lodged in the South Australian Museum, where it will be available for study when the monograph or scientific articles on the art and ethnology of this area is written”. In late 1948, most of the ethnographic material belonging to the Commonwealth Government of Australia, was transported to Adelaide by road where the majority went into storage at the South Australian Museum (Elliott 1992: 10; Hipsley 28.6.54: 1).

According to McCarthy, a small amount of ethnographic material was also delivered directly to the Australian Museum and, subsequently, some of this material was forwarded directly to the United States National Museum (today held in the Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution).

The following boxes have arrived in the first dispatch from Darwin: S1 to S43, and 63. Ethnological and archaeological collection, with personal scientific equipment of Setzler and myself. This collection will be… delivered to the Museum [Australian Museum]. The ethnological material for the U.S.N. Museum will have to be re-packed in the same boxes when the Australian Museum’s collection has been taken out. The archaeological specimens will remain here, but the human skeletal collection will be sent to the U.S.N. Museum for study by one of its staff - portion of this collection will be returned to the Australian Museum (McCarthy 10.2.49: 1).
It appears from this statement that McCarthy had kept his ethnographic collection separate to Mountford’s and had managed to avoid any of it going to Adelaide.

Nevertheless from 1949-1953, the majority of the ethnological material remained at the South Australian Museum while Mountford, as Honorary Associate in Ethnology, conducted research. Mountford never made an inventory of the material and subsequently it became confused with other artefacts he collected for the museum on different occasions such as Oenpelli in 1949, Yirrkala in 1952, and Melville Island in 1954 (McCarthy 23.6.54: 1).

“Now that most of the papers have been completed on the zoological and other collections, the question of the disposal of the specimens arises” (McCarthy 9.2.55: 1). It was nearly six years after the expedition that McCarthy (9.2.55: 1) wrote to the director of the Australian Museum encouraging him to alert the Commonwealth Government of Australia to the whereabouts of the collections they legally owned stating “I do not know what arrangements were made between the Commonwealth Government of Australia and the Smithsonian Institution in regard to the disposal of these collections, and it appears to me to be a matter for decision between them rather than for Mr. Mountford”. Evans (11.2.55: 2) followed-up McCarthy’s suggestion by writing to the Director of the Department of the Interior;

In view of the fact that the Commonwealth Government of Australia contributed substantially to the financing of this expedition, I consider it advisable to make… inquiries from your department, as the matter appears to me to be one for decision by your Government rather than personally by the leader of the Expedition.

McCarthy’s efforts were rewarded, as he was able to encourage the government to reclaim at least some of its material from the South Australian Museum. Stating the current situation regarding the collections, Evans (on advice from McCarthy) wrote, “Ethnology: We have received approximately one third of the weapons, utensils and ceremonial objects, etc., and a small series of bark paintings, a similar collection was sent to the United States National Museum, and the other portion belonging to the Commonwealth Government of Australia is at the South Australian Museum” (Evans 11.2.55: 1).
Another letter from McCarthy to Professor Nadel (Australian National University) stated that the Australian Institute of Anatomy was starting to make inquiries into the material being moved to Canberra. He was writing to encourage Nadel to make his own inquiries and perhaps add to the university’s collections in Canberra (McCarthy 23.6.54: 1). Nadel took McCarthy’s advice and contacted Dr. Hipsley (Director of the AIA) who wrote to Dr. Hale (Director of the South Australian Museum), suggesting that the material be moved (Hipsley 28.6.54: 1).

No action was taken until Mountford returned from Melville Island in 1954, but from October to March 1955, some of the AASEAL ethnographic collection was transferred to Canberra. Of the 676 ethnographic artefacts (the total collected minus the Australian Museum and the Smithsonian Institutions portion) taken to Adelaide following the expedition, officially only 420 were transferred to Canberra in 1954-55 (see Appendix I), including 275 bark and paper paintings (Elliott 1992: 19).

Following the closure of the Australian Institute of Anatomy in 1984, the artefacts they held from the 1948 expedition were transferred to and accessioned by the National Museum of Australia (Elliott 1992: 10). The movements of one specific type of ethnographic artefact, bark paintings, will now be discussed in further detail.

The Dispersal of the Bark Paintings

The bark paintings collected by McCarthy and those allocated during the expedition to the Smithsonian Institution, as discussed above, were delivered directly to the Australian Museum (later forwarded to the United States). The remainder was stored in the South Australian Museum until 1955. In May 1955, the Director of the Australian Institute of Anatomy stated that, “we have recently brought to Canberra from the South Australian Museum the Commonwealth’s share of bark and paper paintings. These number 275, made up of 171 bark paintings and 104 paper paintings mounted on cardboard” (Murphy 23.5.55: 2).

The most important factor in the distribution of the bark paintings (see Plates 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3) as well as the paintings on paper was the outcome of a meeting held on 24 March 1955 at the office of Mr. Kevin Murphy, the Director of the News and Information Bureau. As well as Mr. Murphy, the meeting involved Mr. Mountford and Dr. Hipsley. At this meeting it was decided (Anonymous 24.3.55: 1):
Plate 6.1: Bark painting “Dugout Canoe” from Groote Eylandt painted by Minimini held in the Australian Museum [E53121]
Plate 6.2: Bark painting untitled from Yirrkala painted by an unknown artist held in the Australian Museum [E53151]
Plate 6.3: Bark painting "Hawksbill Turtles" from Groote Eylandt painted by Nangapiana held in the Australian Museum [E53107]
Each of the six states would receive 12 bark paintings and 12 paper paintings.

The South Australian Museum would receive 20 bark paintings and 10 paper paintings.

The Commonwealth (to be held in Trust by the Australian Institute of Anatomy) would keep 79 bark paintings and 23 paper paintings.

It was intended that of the 102 paintings held by the Commonwealth, 50 would be permanently held while 52 would be made available for gift or exchange to overseas countries and museums at the discretion of the Minister of the Interior (Anonymous 24.3.55: 1-2).

In a letter to the Director of the Australian Museum, two months following this meeting, Murphy stated, “I have received strong representations from the Conference of Interstate Art Gallery Directors for a share of these paintings and have offered the conference 144 of them (72 bark and 72 paper) for distribution among the six capital city art galleries” (Murphy 23.5.55: 1).

The six capital city art galleries were:

- The Art Gallery of New South Wales
- The Art Gallery of South Australia
- The Art Gallery of Western Australia
- The National Gallery of Victoria
- The Queensland Art Gallery
- The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

Following Murphy’s decision, a meeting was held at the Queensland Art Gallery to decide which bark and paper paintings the art galleries wanted (Neale 1998: 210).

The Queensland National Art Gallery was the site for this landmark distribution, when the state gallery directors converged on Brisbane for an August 1956 meeting. The paintings, freighted from Melbourne, were assembled for the directors to select twenty-four works apiece, which they were keen to do, as one director commented, before “the anthropological people” pick[ed] first and we [got] the leavings (Campbell 1.9.55, in Neale 1998: 210).
The decision to give these paintings to art galleries in preference to museums was seen as unusual for its time (see Chapters Seven and Eight). In the case of the Queensland Art Gallery, this was one of the first instances of Aboriginal art being accepted for aesthetic rather than ethnographic qualities (Neale 1998: 210).

Currently it is known that AASEAL material is held in the following ten institutions:

- The Art Gallery of New South Wales
- The Art Gallery of South Australia
- The Art Gallery of Western Australia
- The Australian Museum
- The Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution
- The National Gallery of Victoria
- The National Museum of Australia
- The Queensland Art Gallery
- The South Australian Museum
- The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

These will be discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight (see also Appendix J).

**Artefacts Missing from this Analysis**

The ethnographic material from the AASEAL ethnographic collection consists of 2144 known individual artefacts. It is not known what percentage of the total collection this represents, however, it is probable that many of the missing artefacts are located in institutions not listed in the official documents and have restricted access or have changed their form due to a number of reasons, which will now be discussed. The artefacts known to be missing from their home institution are shown in Table 6.1. One ethnographic artefact is known to have been stolen. This was a basket (E52802) stolen while on loan to the Commonwealth Department of Trade from the Australian Museum in 1966.

**Sold, gifted or traded artefacts**

Officially, only one artefact was traded to another institution following the distribution of ethnographic material. The Australian Museum traded a basket [E52808] collected from
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Institution</th>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Type of Artefact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Place of Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>E53175</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Observed missing 12.3.90</td>
<td>Oenpelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47646</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not located for this research</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47702</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not located for this research</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47753</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not located for this research</td>
<td>Oenpelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47775</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not located for this research</td>
<td>Oenpelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47686</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>“Register says “not recd 1/7/1955” in pencil; later comment in ink says “found 2/2/1956 in old fossil room””. Not located for this research.</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47619</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47621</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47625</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Reported not received by 1 July 1955</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47645</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47661</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47682</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47685</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47703</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47707</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47709</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47754</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>“Please note that this object has not turned up after several inventories of the bark painting collection. Although initially selected for the AACG, it was never found and must therefore be considered lost [or never received in the first place?] (PC, 30 July 1999).”</td>
<td>Oenpelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47601</td>
<td>Carved Wooden Figure</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/53 Y1</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47606</td>
<td>Painted Bark Coffin</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55 Y6</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47632</td>
<td>Painted Wooden Paddle</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47634</td>
<td>Carved and Painted Human Figure</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47641</td>
<td>Wax Figure of a Peaceful Dove</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47650</td>
<td>Carved and Painted Wooden Figure of a Turtle</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47652</td>
<td>Carved and Painted Wooden Figure of a Snake Bird</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47658</td>
<td>Carved and Painted Wooden Paddle</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47659</td>
<td>Wooden message-stick</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55, possibly deaccessioned.</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47668</td>
<td>Carved and Painted Wooden Paddle</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47669</td>
<td>Carved and Painted Wooden Paddle</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47676</td>
<td>Decorated Wooden Pipe</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47677</td>
<td>Decorated Wooden Pipe</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47688</td>
<td>Painted Wooden Human Figure</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47690</td>
<td>Painted Wooden Human Figure</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>A47696</td>
<td>Painted Wooden Paddle</td>
<td>Not received 1/7/55</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: Artefacts collected during AASEAL and known to be missing from their home institutions
Milingimbi Island during AASEAL, to Dartmouth College. No artefacts were officially sold or given to institutions not involved with the expedition. The obvious exception to this is the collection of bark and paper paintings which, as described above, were divided up among numerous art galleries around Australia as a gift from the Commonwealth Government. Yet unofficially, Charles Mountford was selling and giving away artefacts from the AASEAL ethnographic collection. There is no evidence to suggest that the ethnologist had permission from the Commonwealth Government, who owned the material, for these activities. Not having a catalogue of the material has made tracking unofficial movements of artefacts extremely difficult and we will never know exactly how much of material from AASEAL was disposed of by Mountford.

Evidence for these actions is found in the diary of McCarthy stating that, “Setzler is disappointed about it. The archaeological material goes to Sydney and Washington. The whole split should be Sydney and Washington. Selling of such a collection could have serious repercussions on Mountford and it is an unusual procedure” (McCarthy 18.3.48). These words would seem to indicate Mountford’s original intentions were to gain a collection for the purpose of sale (see Chapter Five). There is further evidence that Mountford was trading ethnographic artefacts to institutions or individuals overseas. This evidence comes in the form of a letter stating, “I am pleased to know that the bark painting has reached you at last. As you are probably aware, these things have to be sneaked out of Australia. It is hard to get official permission, but I had not forgotten my promise to you” (M-S, V.525 /1: 135). There is no proof that this painting came from AASEAL, however, it remains a possibility and it may explain the apparent absence of many ethnographic artefacts from the collection.

Further evidence of Mountford’s distribution of AASEAL artefacts can be found in the collection held by the Art Gallery of South Australia. There are 62 ethnographic artefacts from AASEAL held in the Art Gallery of South Australia. The Commonwealth Government officially gave 12 bark paintings and 12 paintings on paper to the Gallery in 1956. 25 bark paintings and 12 paintings on paper are today recorded as being given to the Gallery by the Commonwealth Government. Ignoring the fact that 13 more bark paintings were donated to this institution than were promised, there are still 25 ethnographic artefacts and one painted skull that made their way into the Art Gallery of South Australia as a result of the actions of Charles Mountford (see Table 6.2 and Chapter Seven).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution/ Individual Selling or Donating</th>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Type of Artefact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Place of Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1913</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Purchased for 11 pounds by the ASA with funds from the Morgan Thomas Bequest in 1960. Yirrkala</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1914</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Purchased for 11 pounds by the ASA with funds from the Morgan Thomas Bequest in 1960. Yirrkala</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1916</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford</td>
<td>Groote Eylandt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1917</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford 1960</td>
<td>Groote Eylandt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1918</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford 1960</td>
<td>Groote Eylandt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1919</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford 1960</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1855</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford; does not state from AASEAL. Unknown</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>S.124</td>
<td>Carved Wooden Figure</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford August 1957; Y34</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>S.125</td>
<td>Carved Wooden Figure</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford August 1957; Y51</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>S.126</td>
<td>Carved Wooden Figure</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford August 1957; Y52</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>A.642</td>
<td>Painted Paddle</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford August 1957; Y58</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>A.643</td>
<td>Carved Wooden Figure</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford August 1957; Y96</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>A.644</td>
<td>Carved Wooden Pipe or Musical Instrument</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford August 1957; also listed under damaged or altered artefacts</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>S.119</td>
<td>Carved and Painted Wooden Figure</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford February 1955</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>S.120</td>
<td>Carved and Painted Wooden Figure</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford August 1957 or February 1955</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>S.123</td>
<td>Carved and Painted Wooden Figure</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford August 1957; Y34</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1763</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford or the Commonwealth Government</td>
<td>Oenpelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1764</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Gift of Charles Mountford</td>
<td>Oenpelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1765</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Acquired from Mountford</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1766</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Acquired from Mountford</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
</tr>
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<td>O.1767</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Acquired from Mountford</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
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<td>Mountford</td>
<td>O.1768</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Acquired from Mountford</td>
<td>Oenpelli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Artefacts in the Art Gallery of South Australia that were not part of the official gift from the Commonwealth Government
The Changing Form of the Artefacts
Another factor in the changing nature of the collections is whether the form of any of the material has changed through intentional and unintentional actions. The only artefact recorded as being significantly damaged following its acquisition is a carved wooden pipe (A644) collected from Yirrkala and held by the Art Gallery of South Australia (possibly shown in Mountford 1956: 468, Pl. 65A, B).

Changing Access to the Collection
Seven ethnographic artefacts are today not available for research (see Table 6.3). Only 14 bark paintings have been classified secret/sacred by their traditional owners (only 6 of these have restricted access) and one sacred artefact (E55346) was returned to its traditional owners in 1975. Most of these actions have been undertaken by the Australian Museum, however, it is also known that the National Museum of Australia and the Art Gallery of New South Wales have investigated this aspect.

The Effect of Changes in the Contents of the Collection on this Study
As a result of the factors discussed above, not all of the ethnographic artefacts collected during AASEAL have been analysed in this study. It is important for this study to understand how representative the sample is of the entire ethnographic collection. It is clear that most of the collection has been analysed and those artefacts that are missing are comprised of individual pieces and not complete sets. Considering the 2144 ethnographic artefacts that were collected, very few have been damaged, lost or stolen.

By omitting the artefacts known to be missing, traded, or returned (35) from the total number of artefacts collected (2144) it appears that 83.5% of the collection has been analysed in this study. This reduction in the size of the available collection is due primarily to artefacts missing from the South Australian Museum. It is essential to emphasise, however, that the total number of artefacts is unknown due to the actions of the expedition’s leader, Charles Mountford. It is, therefore, impossible to accept that 83.5% of the ethnographic collection is included in this study and this certainly emphasises the importance of understanding curatorial practices in studying ethnographic collections.

The fact that most of the artefacts missing from the collection are bark paintings is concerning in regard to an analysis of these artefacts. Despite this, an understanding of the reasons for their
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trading Institution</th>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Type of Artefact</th>
<th>Reason for Inaccessibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>E53164</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Classified secret/sacred by Kate Khan December 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>E53162</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Classified secret/sacred by Kate Khan December 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>E53155</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Classified secret/sacred by Kate Khan December 1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>E53152</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Classified secret/sacred by Kate Khan December 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>E53147</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Classified secret/sacred by Kate Khan December 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>E53168</td>
<td>Bark Painting</td>
<td>Classified secret/sacred by Kate Khan December 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>E55346</td>
<td>Worked Resin Stone</td>
<td>Repatriated to Oenpelli council by order trustees 4/4/75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: Artefacts with restricted access
absence helps to illuminate the factors influencing the make-up of, not only AASEAL collections, but also other collections from similar time periods and those involving the same collectors.

**Discussion**

Ethnographic collections were originally established within Natural History sections of museums and artefacts were curated in the same way as natural specimens. The aim of these museums was to obtain a representative of each type of artefact, rather than gaining a series of the same artefact. A result of this attitude was that duplicate artefacts were expended in various ways such as exchange, reward and sale. This exchange of artefacts between museums and private collectors was common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and there is evidence of its practice continuing in the same and varied forms through to the 1950s (Cooper 1978: 18; Mulvaney and Calaby 1985: 250; Pescott 1954: 97).

It is only in a limited way that AASEAL represents this practice of duplicating collections but not one so insignificant as to ignore. One example may be the existence of a representative sample of the archaeological material at the Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. presented to them by the Australian Museum in Sydney. It is also clear that there existed a desire to keep collections of the same type of artefact together. This is evident in the allocation of nearly all of the archaeological material to the Australian Museum, nearly all of the physical anthropological material and all of the collected ceramic to the Smithsonian Institution. It could be argued, however, that it was not the intention of the collectors or new owners of the material for the physical anthropological collection to remain long-term in the United States.

**Conclusions**

This chapter has illustrated the dynamic nature of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition’s ethnographic collection during the period 1948 to 1961. Since their acquisition in 1948, the artefacts have been divided between museums in Australia and in the United States and, more important for its time, they were also given to art galleries around Australia. While the archaeological material was divided between the Australian Museum and the Smithsonian Institution and the physical anthropological material was delivered almost entirely to the Smithsonian Institution, the ethnographic material was divided between ten institutions.

One of the most influential aspects of the distribution was the unofficial actions of Mountford. His personal distribution of the ethnographic artefacts, particularly bark paintings, has proven
significant in the formation of institutional collections deriving from AASEAL. This necessitates an analysis of the ethnographic collection in terms of collection and institutional biases to determine whether these trends emerging from the historical records are evidence in a statistical analysis.
Analysis of an Ethnographic Collection

Introduction
The path taken by the American-Australian Scientific Expedition ethnographic artefacts has proven to be complex and, sometimes, difficult to trace. The reasons for these complexities are interwoven with aspects of human nature and, in turn, the institutions that human beings have developed to preserve and present culture. More specifically, from an investigation of the historical evidence surrounding AA SEAL, two influencing factors have appeared above all others in determining the composition of institutional collections. The first is the collectors, their selection and division of the artefacts and their ties to particular institutions. The second is the nature of the institution, art gallery or museum. These two factors will be investigated through the analysis presented in this chapter.

Naturally, the typology of the artefacts changes with each institution’s labelling practices and, consequently, the terms used in this chapter are not based on any one institution but are a combination of all including both formal and functional properties. Many, if not all, of the ethnographic artefacts in this collection had a variety of functions in the Indigenous cultures from which they were taken and the typology used in this analysis is only reflective of the collectors’ knowledge and understanding.

Artefact Collections
The ultimate aim of analysing collections of material culture is to better understand the human behaviour, which is both reflected by, and results in, the artefacts they contain (Fenton 1974). Artefacts provide characteristic evidence in the form of observable traces and inferences can be made from these traces including the types of behaviour which created, used and discarded them (Rathje and Schiffer 1982).

Most archaeologists today would not consider excavating a site without recording their methodology. This may involve keeping a diary of why excavation took place in one area and not another, recording the levels excavated and from which levels the material derives from and so forth. All of these factors influence the form of a collection and assist archaeologists in reaching conclusions regarding this excavated material. It also allows other contemporary or future
researchers to evaluate the methods used to reach these conclusions and decide whether they are valid or not. By better understanding processes involved in the acquisition of ethnographic collections, archaeologists can make more reliable inferences about the human behaviour of the cultures that produced them and the cultures that collected them.

Archaeologists often find themselves consulting institutional collections to make these inferences about human behaviour. Why do archaeologists study institutional collections? To analyse large numbers of artefacts with definite connections to each other (provenance, type and so forth) and to view material that may not be produced in cultures today, may be produced differently or may have different uses than those of the past. In short, archaeologists study collections because they represent an easily accessible data store from which to obtain evidence to make inferences about human behaviour.

While traditionally these collections may have been analysed to make inferences about the producer’s culture, more recently they have also been used for the collector’s culture (Coates 1989). This, as well as highlighting the collector’s society, can assist in better understanding the role of artefacts in indigenous cultures prior to their collection.

It is for this reason that collections are analysed to determine the “collecting process” and to assist in the interpretation of the producer’s culture by better understanding the biases involved. Today most archaeologists would not consider excavating a site without recording their methodology. All of the methods undertaken to acquire the collection influence its form and an understanding of these methods assist archaeologists in reaching conclusions regarding this excavated material. Applying this to ethnographic collections also allows contemporary or future researchers to evaluate the methods used to reach these conclusions.

**Defining Ethnographic Artefacts**

During the recording phase of this research, all ethnological, archaeological and physical anthropological artefacts were recorded. One significant aspect of this study was, therefore, the decision to concentrate upon ethnographic artefacts (see Preface and Chapter Four). Stemming from this decision was the necessity to separate the ethnographic artefacts from the other disciplinary material.
The basic principle used to separate the archaeological and ethnological artefacts is the idea of collecting from the living and from the dead or rather material that is no longer in use by the communities. This was taken from the following definitions of ethnology and archaeology.

Firstly, a simple definition of ethnology given by Bahn (1992: 163) is, “the use of ethnographic data in a comparative analysis to understand how cultures work and why they change”. More recently Renfrew and Bahn (1996: 541) have described it as, “a subset of cultural anthropology concerned with the comparative study of contemporary cultures, with a view to deriving general principles about human society”. They also state that ethnography is, “a subset of cultural anthropology concerned with the study of contemporary cultures through firsthand observations” (Renfrew and Bahn 1996: 540).

Archaeology, on the other hand, has been described as a subdiscipline of anthropology which itself is defined as the study of, “humanity – our physical characteristics as animals, and our unique non-biological characteristics we call culture” (Bahn et al 1996: 539). They go on to state that the subject is generally broken down into three subdisciplines: biological and cultural anthropology and archaeology (Bahn et al 1996: 539). Archaeology is further defined as, “the study of the past through the systematic recovery and analysis of material culture. The primary aims of the discipline are to recover, describe and classify this material, to describe form and behaviour of the past societies and finally to understand the reasons for this behaviour” (Bahn 1992: 28). Archaeological material is, therefore, most commonly defined as the artefacts of past societies.

In the study presented here each artefact was considered individually as to whether it belonged to the archaeological, ethnological or physical anthropological collections. This was done primarily by investigating the available historical records.

**The Role of the Collector in the Formation of Institutional Collections**

It is, of course, a given that whatever is collected is particularly significant to the individual collector. Obviously, his collection is bound to reflect certain aspects of his own personality, his taste, his sophistication or naiveté; his independence of choice or his reliance on the judgement of others (Muensterberger 1994: 4).
Three men are known to be responsible for most of the 2144 ethnographic artefacts collected during AASEAL: Charles Mountford, Frederick McCarthy and Frank Setzler (see Plates 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3). It is their choices, their decision to divide collections and their ties to particular institutions that concern this aspect of the analysis. In short, an answer is sought to the question, what are the biases of the individual collectors in terms of type, number and provenance of artefacts and how has this influenced the composition of institutional collections?

Charles Mountford

In 1948, the Commonwealth Government of Australia employed Charles Mountford to lead AASEAL. He was at the time, working as a filmmaker and lecturer for the Department of Information and Honorary Associate in Ethnology with the South Australian Museum.

Type and Number of Artefacts

Figure 7.1 shows that Mountford collected a total of 38.9% (834 artefacts) of all ethnographic artefacts acquired during AASEAL, the highest number of any individual. The type and number of each artefact is illustrated in Figure 7.2.

Collecting ethnographic artefacts was the primary occupation of Mountford, other than administrative work, during AASEAL. The two other researchers had archaeological fieldwork as well as collection to undertake (see Chapters Three and Five). It is not surprising then that the leader collected the largest number of artefacts. What is interesting from these figures is the type of artefacts being collected.

Figure 7.2 shows that bark paintings, figurines and paintings on paper represent 59.2% of all artefacts collected by Mountford. The primary link between these three types is that they are “artistic” rather than, for example, for domestic use. Sutton (1988: 3) has stated that some critics view the application of the term *art* to things made by Aboriginal people as an act of cultural colonialism. Morphy (1994: 655) largely agrees stating that the anthropology of art is not the study of objects of other cultures that Europeans have accepted as belonging to their category “art”. Likewise, Tacon (1989: 236) acknowledges that various languages spoken across Arnhem Land have no separate term for “art” as most Western societies understand it. Morphy (1994: 655) goes on to state that if anthropology of art is to make a useful contribution, then it must allow for the analysis of objects from other cultures on their own terms while also helping to
Plate 7.1: Mountford and Professor John Bishop of the Elder Conservatorium of Music, Adelaide (Lamshed 1972: 185)
Plate 7.2: Frederick McCarthy 1933 (Attenbrow & Khan, in Sullivan, Brockwell & Webb 1994: 7)
Collectors of Ethnographic Artefacts During AASEAL

Figure 7.1: Collectors of ethnographic material acquired from AASEAL
Figure 7.2: Type and number of artefacts collected by Mountford during AASEAL.
identify categories of objects in other cultures that overlap with European categories of art objects. Morphy (1994: 655) does, however, offer the “anthropological useful” definition of art as “objects having semantic and/or aesthetic properties that are used for presentation or representational purposes”.

The idea that Mountford was primarily interested in the artistic pursuits of the Indigenous communities he visited during his career has already been discussed in this study (see Chapters Three, Five, Six and Eight). Importantly, the ethnologist’s background was in the recording of art, particularly rock art, and not in anthropology. In contrast to many anthropologists in 1948, he believed that artistic expression in Indigenous cultures could be studied separately from social organisation and, as Neale (1998: 210) has argued, was collecting bark paintings as art rather than artefact during a time when indigenous art was seen to fit more readily within anthropology. McCarthy’s (8.8.48) suggestion that Mountford, “[was] not really concerned whether we [got] a collection or not so long as he [got] a private collection of bark paintings” would seem to be reflected in the fact that this artefact type alone represents 40.9% (see Figure 7.2). In short, Mountford was collecting in line with his own research interests (art) and intentions for the materials.

*Provenance*

Figure 7.3 states that Mountford was collecting mostly from the three base camps (see also Appendix D for an explanation of the doubt surrounding the accuracy of some of the places of collection). The type and number of artefacts being collected from these areas are shown in Figures 7.4 to 7.6.

From Yirrkala, Mountford’s primary collections were 103 bark paintings and 74 figurines. From Groote Eylandt 108 bark paintings and 47 spears while at Oenpelli, 117 bark paintings and 34 paintings on paper. Certainly other artefacts were collected but in considerably smaller numbers than these mentioned (see Figures 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6). These figures suggest that Mountford was collecting a large number of single-types of artefacts from each base camp and, to a large extent, ignoring other materials. The types of artefacts being collected may also suggest variations in his primary collecting interests by location. One example of this is his collection of 74 figurines from Yirrkala when in total only 78 figurines were collected during AASEAL (see Figure 7.6). On Groote Eylandt his interest appears to have been in spears and, like figurines, a significantly
Provenance of Ethnographic Artefacts Collected by Mountford During AASEAL

Figure 7.3: Provenance for Mountford’s AASEAL artefacts
Ethnographic Artefacts Collected from Groote Eylandt by Mountford During AASEAL

Figure 7.4: Type and number of artefacts collected by Mountford from Groote Eylandt
Ethnographic Artefacts Collected from Oenpelli by Mountford During AASEAL

![Bar chart showing the number of artefacts by type: Bark Painting: 117, Paper Painting: 34, Basket: 22, Spear: 6, Board: 5, Net: 3, Necklace: 2, Fan: 2, Djeridoo: 2, Club: 2, Stick: 1, Spearthrower: 1, Mat: 1, Drum: 1, Armlet: 1.]

Figure 7.5: Type and number of artefacts collected by Mountford from Oenpelli
Ethnographic Artefacts Collected from Yirrkala by Mountford During AASEAL

![Bar Chart: Type and number of artefacts collected from Yirrkala by Mountford](image)

Figure 7.6: Type and number of artefacts collected from Yirrkala by Mountford
smaller number were collected at the other locations. It could even be suggested from Figure 7.5 that at Oenpelli, paintings on paper were his focus. His collection of 28 from this location was much larger than the other base camps. These artefacts are, of course, secondary to his interest in bark paintings, which were collected from all camps in very large numbers. This implies that Mountford considered them worthy of representation from more than one part of Arnhem Land while other specimens could originate from singular locations.

This differentiation in types of artefacts by location cannot be assigned to collection strategies alone. Local traditions in the production of artefacts are certainly an aspect that cannot be ignored. For example, a tradition of producing figurines may have been well established in the Yirrkala region whereas, at the other base camps, this may have been limited or non-existent. It is widely accepted that the use of bark as a medium on which to paint was widespread throughout Australia (see Chapter Eight). This may have influenced Mountford’s ability to collect large numbers of these artworks from all of the base camps rather than just one or two. In contrast, the large collection of paintings on paper from Oenpelli are more likely to be influenced by collection strategies than by local traditions which did not include the use of paper as medium for painting.

**Distribution**

Mountford’s overall contribution to institutional collections from AASEAL is featured in Figure 7.7. This illustrates the total number of AASEAL artefacts held by each institution and the percentage of these that were collected by Mountford. From this information, it can be extrapolated that Mountford’s biases in collection, previously discussed, have influenced the composition of ten collections including both art galleries and museums.

This influence is most obvious in the South Australian Museum where, as Figure 7.8 explains, Mountford collected 89.9% (all but 27) of the 268 artefacts. In turn, Figure 7.9 illustrates that 103 artefacts (38.4%) in this institution’s collection are bark paintings and another 62 artefacts (23.1%) are figurines reflecting the collector’s aforementioned interest in these specific artefact types. Figure 7.10 shows that the majority of artefacts in this museum were collected from Yirrkala. This may be a result of the large collection of figurines from this base camp that the museum acquired. In contrast, Oenpelli is represented primarily by bark paintings.
Figure 7.7: Distribution of artefacts collected during AASEAL by Mountford
Collectors of AASEAL Artefacts held in the South Australian Museum

- Mountford (89.9%)
- Ellemor for Mountford (4.9%)
- Setzler and McCarthy (4.9%)
- McCarthy (0.4%)

Figure 7.8: Collectors of AASEAL artefacts held in the South Australian Museum
Artefacts from AASEAL held in the South Australian Museum

Figure 7.9: Type and number of artefacts from AASEAL held in the South Australian Museum
Percentage of South Australian Museum's AASEAL Collection from each Location

- Yirrkala (56.7%)
- Oenpelli (21.3%)
- Milingimbi Island (9.7%)
- Not Specified (6%)
- Groote Eylandt (6%)
- Cape Stewart (0.4%)

Figure 7.10: Provenance of Artefacts held in the South Australian Museum from AASEAL
Figure 7.10 also shows that Groote Eylandt is under-represented in the South Australian Museum compared with material from the other base camps. It seems appropriate here to refer back to Chapter Six and the discussion of the process of distribution of the AASEAL ethnographic collection. In short, most of the ethnographic collection (except the Australian Museum’s and Smithsonian Institution’s portion) was held in the South Australian Museum until 1955 when it was distributed to art galleries and the Australian Institute of Anatomy (eventually the National Museum of Australia). This suggests Mountford, at the South Australian Museum, had immense control over what material was sent on and what his institution kept.

The lack of artefacts from Groote Eylandt, therefore, was probably the result of decisions made by Mountford. It is possible that Groote Eylandt was not an area of research for Mountford. Likewise, the museum may have considered that their collections from this island (such as Tindale’s 1921 collection) were large enough. Another possibility is that the decision to pass on artefacts from Groote Eylandt was simply a practical matter such as access to these artefacts when the material had to be moved (Andrew Hughes 2000, pers. comm., 20 September).

Figure 7.11 shows that Mountford collected 71.6% of the Smithsonian Institution’s AASEAL collection. Interestingly, most of his collection of spears from Groote Eylandt are today held in this institution and contribute greatly to this artefact’s representation. This is the only institution for which bark paintings are not the primary artefact, however, the difference in numbers between spears and bark paintings is only one example (see Figure 7.12). The collection of spears may reflect a disinterest in this type of artefact on Mountford’s behalf. This phenomenon may further suggest Mountford’s desire to keep other artefacts (such as art) for research. His actual collecting of spears certainly lessened the impact of art, however, his distribution of these artefacts once again emphasises the bias. Likewise, as the decision regarding distribution was made in the field, some influence may lie with their representative and, therefore, the institution itself. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

The large percentage of spears from Groote Eylandt in this institution raises the overall percentage from this area. Figure 7.13 shows that 35.7% of all ethnographic artefacts in the Smithsonian Institution were collected from this location, followed by 28.6% from Yirrkala.
Collectors of Artefacts held in the Smithsonian Institution from AASEAL

Figure 7.11: Collectors of artefacts held in the Smithsonian Institution from AASEAL
Artefacts from AASEAL held in the Smithsonian Institution

Figure 7.12: Type and number of artefacts from AASEAL held in the Smithsonian Institution
Percentage of Artefacts held in the Smithsonian Institution from each Location

- Groote Eylandt (35.7%)
- Yirrkala (28.6%)
- Milingimbi Island (18.3%)
- Oenpelli (15.2%)
- Delissaville (2.0%)
- Not Specified (0.2%)

Figure 7.13: Provenance of artefacts held in the Smithsonian Institution from AASEAL
Figure 7.14 shows that Mountford collected 51.6% of the National Museum of Australia’s AASEAL artefacts. His influence, therefore, is less dominant than at the South Australian Museum or the Smithsonian Institution. Once again, bark paintings dominate with 82 specimens (representing 32.8% of their entire ethnographic collection) with Mountford being responsible for 81.7% of these (see Figures 7.15 and 7.16). Nearly half of these paintings were acquired from Groote Eylandt (see Figure 7.17 and Chapter Eight). As discussed earlier, this bias towards Groote Eylandt could be a direct result of Mountford’s decision to not keep these specimens in the South Australian Museum.

Mountford collected 98.4% of the Art Gallery of South Australia’s 62 ethnographic artefacts from the 1948 Expedition (see Figure 7.18). This number includes 41 (66.1%) bark paintings. Paintings on paper number 12 and represent 19.4% of the collection while figurines number six and 9.7% (see Figure 7.19). Figure 7.20 reveals that 54.8% of the artefacts held in this institution were collected from Yirrkala. Mountford’s influence on this gallery’s collection from AASEAL is more obvious due to the unofficial movements of AASEAL artefacts by Mountford (see Chapter Six). Their interest in art is, naturally, due to the nature of the institution. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

Like the Art Gallery of South Australia, art objects collected by Charles Mountford dominate the other collections from AASEAL held in art galleries and in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (see discussion of art galleries later in this chapter). The very high rate of artefacts collected by Mountford in art galleries is most likely due to him being the primary collector of art. Likewise, it may also be due to other collectors keeping their artefacts in their home institution rather than distributing them. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

In short, Mountford’s collecting biases have influenced, in varying degrees, the collections of ten institutions including both museums and art galleries. The lack of artefacts collected by Mountford in the Australian Museum is worthy of note and will perhaps be more clearly understood following a discussion of McCarthy’s collecting and distribution. Even though the Smithsonian Institution had a representative on AASEAL, their collection is still primary the result of Mountford. The result of this is a collection dominated by artefacts not desired by the leader for his personal research.
Collectors of Artefacts held in the National Museum of Australia from AASEAL

Figure 7.14: Collectors of artefacts held in the National Museum of Australia from AASEAL
AASEAL Artefacts held in the National Museum of Australia

Figure 7.15: Type and number of AASEAL artefacts held in the National Museum of Australia
Percentage of Bark Paintings held in the National Museum of Australia and Collected by Mountford During AASEAL

- Number Collected by Mountford (81.7%)
- Total held by the Institution

Figure 7.16: Number of the bark paintings held in the National Museum of Australia collected by Mountford

Provenance of Bark Paintings held in the National Museum of Australia

- Groote Eylandt (47.6%)
- Oenpelli (19.5%)
- Milingimbi Island (18.3%)
- Yirrkala (14.6%)

Figure 7.17: Place of collection for bark paintings held in the National Museum of Australia
Collectors of AASEAL Artefacts held in the Art Gallery of South Australia

Figure 7.18: Percentage of artefacts from AASEAL held in the Art Gallery of South Australia and collected by Mountford

Type and Number of Artefacts held in the Art Gallery of South Australia from AASEAL

Figure 7.19: Type and number of artefacts held in the Art Gallery of South Australia from AASEAL

Provenance of Artefacts from AASEAL held in the Art Gallery of South Australia

Figure 7.20: Provenance of artefacts held in the Art Gallery of South Australia from AASEAL
Frederick McCarthy

Frederick McCarthy, the first museum curator in Australia to be trained in social anthropology, was the Australian Museum’s representative on AASEAL (Sutton 1988: 159). His aims, discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis, are clearly evident in his collection of ethnographic artefacts from Arnhem Land and his influence on collections deriving from AASEAL is limited primarily to one institution.

The collection strategies employed by Mountford and McCarthy were significantly different. Firstly, Mountford, coming from a background outside of the anthropological establishment, appears not to have been interested in collecting a representative sample of indigenous material culture but rather a collection of artistic artefacts. McCarthy, on the other hand, appears to have sought to keep away from Mountford’s collecting interests. His collection of art objects is limited and his range of material culture is greater. The figures represented in this analysis show a mixture of the anthropologist’s aims of representation and specialisation. While McCarthy came to Arnhem Land with the aim of filling gaps in the existing collections of material culture at the Australian Museum, he also desired to collect and record those objects that the expedition members observed being made and used (see Chapter Five; Jones 1987: 12).

Type and Number

Figure 7.21 shows that McCarthy’s collection represents a more diverse range of artefacts than Mountford but a lesser total number of 709 (see Figure 7.1). It also represents a lesser focus on art artefacts and towards other sections of society such as children. Figure 7.21 shows that his two major collections were string figures and armlets. Apart from these two specific collections, there is no obvious weight laid upon any aspect of the cultures he visited but rather a range of weapons, tools, toys, musical instruments, containers and so forth, were collected.

It would seem unusual that if McCarthy was trying to avoid overlapping of research areas, he should collect 62 bark paintings (see Figure 7.21). This is probably due to Mountford directing McCarthy to collect a limited number for the Australian Museum and, hence, reflects the aims discussed earlier to fill gaps in material culture at this museum. Bark paintings are represented by only represent only 62 specimens or 8.75% of the ethnographic artefacts collected by McCarthy (see Figure 7.21). This is significantly lower than Mountford’s 341 bark paintings or 40.2% of all ethnographic material collected (see Figure 7.2).
Figure 7.21: Type and number of artefacts collected by McCarthy during AASEAL
Provenance

Figure 7.22 shows the three base camps represent the place of collection for most of the artefacts. This includes 51.3% or 364 artefacts from Yirrkala primarily boosted by his collection of 193 string figures from this camp. From Groote Eylandt, McCarthy collected 207 ethnographic artefacts including large numbers of spears and armlets. This may reflect a greater number being produced by the community or perhaps a stylistic feature of spears from this area attracting the researchers. Likewise, this bias may be a result of transportation or storage problems. Both Mountford and McCarthy, for example, collected spears, from the first base camp in large numbers. It may have, therefore, been decided that less were to be acquired from the latter base camps. Alternatively, the collectors may have simply considered the collection of spears from Groote Eylandt as sufficient for their research and found it unnecessary to collect large numbers from the other locations.

From Oenpelli, McCarthy collected 118 ethnographic artefacts. The largest number of artefacts collected was bark paintings, followed by spears. The number of armlets collected by McCarthy significantly decreased at the final base camp. Considering 49 were collected from Groote Eylandt and 52 from Yirrkala it seems unusual that only 5 were acquired from this location.

The collection of string figures and armlets could be seen as examples of specialisation. Alternatively, these large numbers may be due simply to the ease with which they could be stored and transported. Another possibility is that large numbers of these artefacts were being produced or could be produced by the people of Yirrkala but not from the other base camps.

Distribution

In terms of distribution, the Australian Museum received most of the artefacts collected by their representative (see Figure 7.23). Interestingly, Mountford collected a tiny 1.9% of the artefacts held in the Australian Museum. This small number may be due to the personal problems that existed between Mountford and McCarthy (see Appendix E and Chapter Three). In other words, Mountford may have refused to allocate much of his collection to the Australian Museum due to his dislike of their representative. Another possibility is that McCarthy simply obtained a large enough collection for the museum to be satisfied without the input of Mountford.
Provenance of AASEAL Artefacts Collected by McCarthy

![Pie chart showing provenance of AASEAL artefacts collected by McCarthy.]

Yirrkala (51.3%)  
Groote Eylandt (29.2%)  
Oenpelli (16.6%)  
Cape Stewart (1.6%)  
Liverpool River Region (0.7%)  
Delissaville (0.4%)  
Bickerton Island (0.1%)

Figure 7.22: Provenance of AASEAL artefacts collected by McCarthy

Collectors of Australian Museum Artefacts from AASEAL

![Pie chart showing collectors of AASEAL artefacts in the Australian Museum.]

McCarthy (66.3%)  
Setzler and McCarthy (26.3%)  
McCarthy or Mountford (5.6%)  
Mountford (1.9%)

Figure 7.23: Collectors of ethnographic artefacts held in the Australian Museum from AASEAL
The only other institution to have received artefacts collected individually by McCarthy is the National Museum of Australia. Figure 7.24 shows that they hold spears, spearthrowers and worked stone collected by him. Considering the aforementioned statistics regarding the limited distribution of his material, the placement of these artefacts seems unusual. One possibility for this occurrence is that McCarthy collected these artefacts and thought them more useful to another institution or individual. Likewise, the historical records surrounding this material may be incorrect.

McCarthy’s influence, therefore, can be seen as less widespread than Mountford’s considering most of his collection was deposited with the Australian Museum. His decision to specialise by location with the collection of artefacts like string figures and armlets has meant greater numbers of this artefact type and greater representation of the location from which they were collected. Contrary to this specialisation, McCarthy was also determined to gain a representative sample of material culture. While it is impossible to say that the material is representative of all areas of life, it is possible to state that it is more representative than Mountford’s collection. Without the historical records stating that he aimed for this representation, it would be possible to assume that it was due to his ability to leave the missions or settlements and live with nomadic communities around Arnhem Land. This would have introduced him to a larger range of material culture than Mountford who, due to his leadership responsibilities, travelled very little away from the base camps.

**Frank Setzler**

Frank Setzler was an archaeologist employed by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. and deputy-leader of AASEAL. Being employed for the duration of AASEAL as an archaeologist meant his collection of ethnographic artefacts is significantly less than that of Mountford or McCarthy. His collection of 1160 archaeological artefacts while McCarthy sustains the fact that he was preoccupied with archaeological research (see Appendix G).

Figure 7.1 illustrates that Setzler collected 31 artefacts during AASEAL and Figure 7.25 reveals the different types. The collection includes 11 bark paintings (35.5%) and seven spears (22.6%). 71% of Setzler’s artefacts were collected from Groote Eylandt while Oenpelli is not represented at all (see Figure 7.26). All of these artefacts were delivered to the Smithsonian Institution.
Figure 7.24: The three types of artefact collected by McCarthy and today held in the National Museum of Australia

Figure 7.25: Type and number of ethnographic artefacts collected by Setzler during AASEAL.
Provenance of Artefacts Collected by Setzler During AASEAL

![Pie chart showing the provenance of artefacts collected by Setzler during AASEAL]

- Groote Eylandt (71%)
- Yirrkala (22.6%)
- Delissaville (6.5%)

Figure 7.26: Provenance of ethnographic artefacts collected by Setzler during AASEAL
In short, Setzler did not collect a great deal of ethnographic material but, when he did, it was primarily bark paintings or spears he collected. These two artefact types are the largest collections held in the Smithsonian Institution from AASEAL. The small numbers presented make it impossible to reach many conclusions regarding the biases and general collection strategies of Setzler. What is interesting, however, is the fact that he could and did collect ethnographic artefacts despite being employed as an archaeologist. Setzler’s artefacts may reflect the casual way in which collection was taking place during AASEAL. Likewise, Setzler’s they may represent lulls in archaeological fieldwork.

Frederick McCarthy and Frank Setzler
McCarthy and Setzler joined for a number of archaeological excavations during AASEAL and, thus, were often working away from base camps together for archaeological purposes when they received the opportunity to collect ethnographic material (Mountford 1956: 267). Together they collected 1031 archaeological artefacts (see Appendix G).

Type and Number
Figure 7.1 shows that together these men collected 330 ethnographic artefacts. The types of artefacts collected are shown in Figure 7.27. The largest collection by these two men was 126 pieces of worked stone. It would seem too much of a coincidence that the two men concerned with archaeological investigation were collecting a great number of stone tools as ethnographic artefacts. It is possible that they were interested in the “present-day” uses of many of the stone tools they were excavating. Likewise, other collectors from AASEAL may have simply overlooked this type of artefact making this collection seem large. Baskets also represent a considerable 54 artefacts (16.4% of their collection). Mountford was not collecting baskets from any location in large numbers. The occurrence of this artefact type in the collection of McCarthy and Setzler may, thereby, be a result of these researchers trying to avoid Mountford’s areas of research.

As seen earlier in this chapter, McCarthy collected all but pigment in large numbers in other locations (see Figure 7.21). Setzler at different locations also collected spears and armlets (see Figure 7.25). Their joint collection could, therefore, be seen as representing the combined efforts of the researchers to collect specimens of interest to themselves and their institutions. It is notable that only 2 bark paintings were definitely collected by the men. This may have been the reason
Figure 7.27: Type and number of ethnographic artefacts collected by Setzler and McCarthy during AASEAL
Mountford asked Reverend Ellemor to send paintings to him after Setzler and McCarthy had returned to the base camp (Mountford 1956: 267; Mountford to Ellemor dated 4.10.50: 38). It may also emphasises the different aims of the collectors and their desire to keep away from each other’s research areas.

**Provenance**

Figure 7.28 illustrates that Setzler and McCarthy were collecting from 4 locations. The largest number of artefacts came from Milingimbi Island and represent 57.9% of their entire combined collection.

This is significantly higher than Oenpelli and Yirrkala, which represent 18.8% and 17.6% consecutively. At the first base camp, Groote Eylandt, they collected only 5.8%. Their collecting as a team was, therefore, increasing as the expedition progressed. Worked stone, previously discussed, was the primary artefact type being collected from all camps except Milingimbi Island.

Figure 7.29 shows that from Milingimbi Island the main collections were baskets, worked stone and spears. The high number of baskets collected may be representative of the local traditions of manufacturing these materials. Setzler and McCarthy are not recorded as having requested any particular artefacts during their stay on this island. Instead, the men collected the material brought to their tent by the Indigenous people. Certainly this does not mean it is more representative of the material culture of the societies, but it does mean the collection is less representative of the collector’s interests. Considering the two men collected such a large number of artefacts in such a short period of time, it is unlikely that they were declining objects. This, in turn may add to the argument presented above.

It is possible that the Milingimbi Island collection reflects that Indigenous communities were producing artefacts solely for trade with westerners. As Ryan (1990: 16) has stated, “throughout the 1930s and 1940s Aboriginal bark painters learned to anticipate the requirements of particular collectors and to produce works which would guarantee payment in tobacco currency”. Though she is referring to the production of one artefact type, it is reasonable that this could apply to a greater number of artefacts produced for AASEAL, and in particular, for the impromptu collecting of Setzler and McCarthy on Milingimbi Island. Also, Morphy (1989: 27) has stated “the Methodist missions established at Milingimbi Island and Yirrkala in the 1920s and 1930s
Percentage of Artefacts from Each Location Collected by Setzler and McCarthy

- Milingimbi Island (57.9%)
- Oenpelli (18.8%)
- Yirrkala (17.6%)
- Groote Eylandt (5.8%)

Figure 7.28: Provenance of ethnographic artefacts collected by Setzler and McCarthy during AASEAL
Figure 7.29: Type and number of ethnographic artefacts collected by Setzler and McCarthy on Milingimbi Island during AASEAL.
encouraged the production of craft, including bark paintings, for sale to a wide market and provided major collections for museums”. The large collection of baskets and spears could be a result of the Indigenous communities having the experience to predict a desire for such artefacts on the part of the researchers.

**Distribution**

Figure 7.30 shows that the collection that these two men formed was distributed to four museums and one art gallery. Figure 7.30 also shows that 82.7% went to the Australian Museum where they represent 26.3% of the Australian Museum’s AASEAL collection (see Figure 7.23). This large percentage may be a result of the collection of worked stone from AASEAL (both archaeological and ethnological) being deposited in this institution with only a representative sample being given to the Smithsonian Institution.

The National Museum of Australia’s collection includes 4% from Setzler and McCarthy (see Figure 7.14). This number is decreased because of the 21.6% the National Museum of Australia’s collection having no recorded collector but being acquired from Milingimbi Island, which means that it was the work of Reverend Ellemor who was collecting for Mountford or Setzler and McCarthy (see Figure 7.14). All of this material was collected from Milingimbi Island and these two groups of collectors are the only men who visited this island and, therefore, are the only two groups who could be responsible.

Figure 7.30 shows that the South Australian Museum received 3.9% of Setzler and McCarthy’s collection. This included 13 baskets from Milingimbi Island. This may have resulted because Mountford desired a percentage of this large collection of baskets for his institution. Likewise, a trade agreement may have been reached where Setzler and McCarthy received some of the artefacts collected by Mountford (such as bark paintings) in return for their baskets. Finally, the Queensland Art Gallery received 0.6% of their collection (see Figure 7.30). This included one painting on bark and one on paper. Considering nearly all of McCarthy’s collection and all of Setzler’s collection went to their home institutions, it seems unusual that these artefacts should be placed in this institution. It is possible that the two paintings became “mixed-up” with Mountford’s collection or the historical records stating these two men as the collectors may be incorrect.
Distribution of Ethnographic Artefacts Collected by Setzler and McCarthy During AASEAL

- Australian Museum (84.2%)
- Smithsonian Institution (8.2%)
- South Australian Museum (3.9%)
- National Museum of Australia (3%)
- Queensland Art Gallery (0.6%)

Figure 7.30: Distribution of AASEAL artefacts collected by Setzler and McCarthy
Other

A number of artefacts cannot be allocated to any one collector while some simply have no recorded collector (Appendix K).

The Influence of the Institution in Determining their Collection

This analysis aims at determining whether the type of institution, museum or art gallery, influenced the composition of their collections. This query has been raised after the discussions in Chapter Five regarding the changing views of art in Indigenous cultures during the 1940s. Mountford has been labelled one of the first collectors of Indigenous art as art rather than artefact (Morphy 1998: 29; Neale 1998: 212; Ryan 1990: 17). This idea and the influence of Mountford on all institutional collections deriving from AASEAL may be reflected in the distribution of the collections to museums, where artistic artefacts of Indigenous cultures were traditionally kept, and in art galleries, where Indigenous art had not been acquired in great numbers by most.

The Museums

Figure 7.31 illustrates the type and number of artefacts held in the Australian Museum from AASEAL. Figures 7.9, 7.15 and 7.12 show this same inquiry for the South Australian Museum, the National Museum of Australia and the Smithsonian Institution.

From these illustrations of the types of AASEAL artefacts held in museums, some trends appear. Firstly, bark paintings are dominant in all museums, yet they are not always the primary artefacts held. The National Museum of Australia and the South Australian Museum were both largely influenced by Mountford’s choices and, in turn, artworks appear much more than any other type. At the Smithsonian Institution, spears and bark paintings are almost even in number whereas at the Australian Museum, string figures, worked stone, armlets and bark paintings are relatively evenly represented. This suggests that museums were still acquiring a great deal of paintings, in particular, from AASEAL.

These paintings were, therefore, being acquired, stored and curated as artefact rather than art. Added to this they were the primary artefact type being acquired from these Indigenous cultures. This is almost certainly reflective of the collector’s biases rather than the numbers of these artefacts being used and produced in these cultures. It is interesting that the only museum to have
Figure 7.31: Type and number of ethnographic artefacts from AASEAL held in the Australian Museum
sent a representative trained in social anthropology (the Australian Museum), received the most representative collection from Arnhem Land with less dominance of bark paintings.

Ryan (1990: 14) has stated that before the 1950s the major collectors of Indigenous art were anthropologists with interests in mythology, ritual and kinship systems. These anthropologists were primarily interested in the relationship of art to ceremony and what it revealed about the culture. Morphy (1998: 29) stated that anthropological interest in Aboriginal art increased around the time of World War Two when it began to be viewed as an expression of religious values rather than an indicator of evolution. The distribution of AASEAL artistic artefacts to both museums and art galleries occurred during this crossover period. From these figures it appears that museums were not yet ready to give up their reign over art to art galleries despite a push from the latter institutions (see Chapter Six).

The lack of paintings on paper in museums may further suggest that the medium was important to these institutions. As Sutton (1988: 37) has argued, westerners often discouraged Indigenous art because of its so-called “crudeness”. The art was crude not only because of “the slight degree of finesse” but also because of its media” (Sutton 1988: 37). Ironically, where Indigenous artists have used smoother and more “acceptable” media, they have been criticised by those who consider such innovations inauthentic (Sutton 1988: 38). It is possible that those selecting the paintings to be held by museums held this view of paintings on paper as not being authentic enough to be housed in a museum.

The Art Galleries

Figure 7.32 shows the type and number of artefacts held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Figures 7.19, 7.33, 7.34 and 7.35 show these same inquiries for the Art Gallery of South Australia, the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the Queensland Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Victoria.

The Art Gallery of South Australia received more artefacts from AASEAL than any other art gallery (see Chapter Six). Their collection includes 66.1% bark paintings and 19.4% paintings on paper (see Figure 7.19). Interestingly, their collection also includes figurines, a tjuringa, a pipe and a paddle (all painted or engraved). In the Art Gallery of New South Wales, paintings on paper represent 66.7% of their collection with the remainder being bark paintings (see Figure 7.32). The
AASEAL Artefacts held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales

![Pie chart showing 66.7% Paper Painting and 33.3% Bark Painting](image)

Figure 7.32: Type and number of AASEAL ethnographic artefacts held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales

AASEAL Artefacts held in the Art Gallery of Western Australia

![Pie chart showing 55.6% Paper Painting and 44.4% Bark Painting](image)

Figure 7.33: Type and number of AASEAL ethnographic artefacts held in the Art Gallery of Western Australia
AASEAL Artefacts held in the Queensland Art Gallery

Figure 7.34: Type and number of AASEAL ethnographic artefacts held in the Queensland Art Gallery

AASEAL Artefacts held in the National Gallery of Victoria

Figure 7.35: Type and number of AASEAL ethnographic artefacts held in the National Gallery of Victoria
Art Gallery of Western Australia holds 5 paintings on paper and 4 bark paintings while the National Gallery of Victoria holds 16 bark paintings and 7 paintings on paper. Figure 7.34 shows that the Queensland Art Gallery collection has 14 bark paintings and 9 paintings on paper.

All seventeen artefacts from AASEAL held in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery are bark paintings. Due to this institution being both a museum and art gallery these statistics have been separated for analysis.

The agreements, discussed in Chapter Six, stated that the Commonwealth Government of Australia offered 12 bark paintings and 12 paintings on paper to each of the art galleries of Australia (including the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery). The figures discussed in this chapter would seem to insinuate that these conditions were not met but rather a great many variations emerged. The most obvious is with the Art Gallery of South Australia, which received a total of 53 paintings, rather than the 24 they were promised (see Chapter Six).

The Art Gallery of New South Wales received two more paintings than promised while the Queensland Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Victoria received one more. The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Western Australia received less. Along with the differences in numbers gained by each art gallery, a difference in the types of paintings received appears. For example, rather than the promised 12 bark and 12 paper paintings, the National Gallery of Victoria received 16 bark paintings and 7 paintings on paper. On the other hand, the Art Gallery of New South Wales received 16 paintings on paper and only 8 bark paintings.

It could be assumed, considering the difference in number is evident in all the collections, that some selection was involved on behalf of the art galleries. Figure 7.36 shows the percentage of paintings on paper held in art galleries in contrast to the percentage of bark paintings held. This shows that bark paintings outnumber paintings on paper from AASEAL. According to the historical records, this is not due to the sample from which they were choosing being biased (see Chapter Six). Art galleries appear to have been unfazed about choosing paintings on a bark medium rather than a less so-called “crude” medium such as paper (Sutton 1988: 37). Their push for a share of the AASEAL artefacts and, in turn, their deliberate selection in many cases of paintings on bark in preference to those on paper would seem to suggest that they were eager to absorb Indigenous art into the art gallery experience and to accept these materials as art rather than artefact.
Percentage of Paintings in Art Galleries from AASEAL
Produced on Bark and on Paper

- Bark Paintings (67.1%)
- Paintings on Paper (32.9%)

Figure 7.36: Percentage of bark versus paper paintings from AASEAL held in art galleries
Neale (1998: 210) has allocated this early enthusiasm to the galleries reluctance to “look a gift horse in the mouth” and states that they were flattered to have been treated to such a gift. It is important to remember, however, that it was almost certainly the art galleries who made the initial move and requested a selection from AASEAL (see Chapter Six; Murphy 23.5.55: 1). Despite this interest in the artworks, those in many galleries such as Queensland Art Gallery were not accessioned until much later (Neale 1998: 210). Neale (1998: 212) also argues that art galleries received a gift that they were not sure how to handle. To consider these bark paintings as equal partners in the “fine arts” was premature for these institutions. Morphy (1998: 29) may have been underestimating the impact of these accessions when he stated, “a few paintings collected by Mountford… had been distributed by the Australian Government to the main state art galleries, but it was the collections… made by Stuart Scougall and Tony Tuckson for the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1958 and 1959, that had the more significant impact”. The wheels of change were without doubt set in motion by the 1948 acquisitions.

**Conclusions**

A question was posed at the beginning of this thesis regarding the influences on institution collections that have derived from the ethnographic artefacts collected during AASEAL. This analysis has shown the area of collection strategies to be complex, however, particular trends have appeared in many areas of investigation. The first of the two sections analysed in this chapter was the influence of the personal biases of the collectors. Naturally, the overwhelming answer to this initial query is that the collectors chose and distributed the artefacts, thereby influencing in a great many ways the collections that resulted. The collectors did not go into these communities and collect random artefacts but rather selected those that best suited their needs. Mountford had an overwhelming influence on many institutions while the other two collectors influenced primarily their home institutions.

The collections held in all art galleries, the National Museum of Australia and the South Australian Museum have largely resulted from decisions made by Charles Mountford. Placing aside questions of regional variation and the individual abilities of the manufacturers within Indigenous communities, Mountford is responsible for the selection and distribution of a great deal of AASEAL material. This analysis has shown a bias towards artefact objects at all locations visited by the leader, in particular, a bias towards bark paintings. These facts concur with the evidence suggested for Mountford’s aims and intentions in Chapter Five. In terms of distribution, his decision to hold very few paintings from Groote Eylandt in the South Australian Museum but
rather pass them on for the art galleries and, eventually, the National Museum of Australia has meant distinct biases in these collections in terms of provenance. Naturally, it has also meant a lack of representation from Groote Eylandt in the South Australian Museum. Mountford and his decision to allocate particular artefacts, which he did not require or desire to museums, have for example helped form the collection in the Smithsonian Institution, particularly in reference to spears.

Fred McCarthy appears to have been interested in representation and specialisation which, though appearing contradictory, actually succeeded in the field. His collection of worked stone being used in the communities, children’s toys as well as both men’s and women’s artefacts are just a few examples of his wider-reaching collection strategies. It is likely that his training as a social anthropologist influenced his collection strategies and, unlike Mountford, there is no evidence that McCarthy desired personal gain (other than training and publications) from his collections. His commitment to gaining a significant collection for the Australian Museum is evident in his arrangements for the material to come directly to this institution rather than via Adelaide with everything else. It could be argued that the Australian Museum benefited from AASEAL more than any other institution with not only a large collection but also the most representative of artefacts from the Arnhem Land Indigenous cultures.

The second part of this analysis was concerned with the nature of the institution receiving artefacts from AASEAL and how this impacted upon their selection. It appears that AASEAL occurred in a transition period for art galleries and museums in terms of art objects. This analysis has shown that art galleries desired paintings from AASEAL in their institutions and often selected those on bark over those on paper when the opportunity arose. Museums, on the other hand, were also keen to acquire Indigenous art and, as was traditional, keep art as artefacts. The lack of paintings on paper in museums may further suggest that it was thought to be the medium that made paintings “ethnographic” for these institutions. Interestingly, the primary collector for many museums appears to have been unconcerned with the medium, instead concentrating on the imagery. Ryan (1990: 17) stated in reference to Indigenous art before the 1950s “its aesthetic power had not been unlocked”. AASEAL may reflect the start of the unlocking process.
8

An Analysis of Bark Painting from the American-Australian Scientific Expedition

Plate 8.1: Bark painting “Two frogs and a billabong” from Groote Eylandt by Minimini, held in SI (E387389)

To Aboriginal people art is linked to land, history and identity, and in journeying to other places it carries those connotations with it (Morphy 1998: 37).

Introduction
As discussed in Chapter Seven, bark paintings were collected more than any other ethnographic artefact during the American-Australian Scientific Expedition. In fact, they represent an enormous 22.6% of all ethnographic artefacts collected. Reasons for this biased sample have been suggested throughout this thesis, particularly, in the Preface and Chapter Four and this analysis aims to further assist in the understanding of this phenomenon. Bark paintings, as will be discussed later in this chapter, existed in Indigenous Australian cultures prior to colonisation, and today the production and sale of these works has meant numerous social and economic changes to the process of painting bark. Today in Yirrkala, Groote Eylandt and Oenpelli (the three base camps for AASEAL) bark paintings are produced and sold on a larger scale than ever before. It is
for this reason that an understanding of the influences on the practice of painting bark and the processes by which the art made its way into western institutions is relevant.

This chapter is an analysis of the collection and distribution of bark paintings from AASEAL with particular reference to paintings also applied to paper. The exact number of artworks collected during AASEAL is uncertain, however, 484 were located for this study and there is reason to believe that this number represents the majority, if not all, of the paintings acquired (see Chapters Five and Six). A range of analyses will be carried out under the following six headings:

- Provenance of bark paintings
- The collection of paintings on paper in relation to those on bark
- The collectors of bark paintings
- The role of the collector in the formation of institutional collections
- The distribution of bark paintings
- The provenance of bark paintings in current institutional collections

Before this analysis, however, the role of bark paintings in the Indigenous cultures of Arnhem Land and the history of western investigation into these art forms will be briefly discussed. Specifically, it is important to understand the many roles bark paintings had and still have in the cultures of Arnhem Land. This understanding is pertinent to the issue of collection strategies and representation of these cultures in institutions. In short, it is intended that this discussion will give context to an analysis of a post-World War Two collection of bark paintings.

**Bark painting in Australia**

As early as 1807 an artist, in his sketch of a burial-place on Maria Island, Tasmania, illustrated painted sheets of bark (Ryan 1990: 1). Later in the nineteenth century, Bunce (1857: 49-50), Curr (1886: 273) and Smyth (1878: 292) discussed and illustrated paintings produced on bark and argued their uses. From these early accounts and other historical sources, it is today accepted that bark paintings had a role in the Indigenous cultures of Arnhem Land prior to contact with Europeans. Numerous scholars have stated this role included occasional ceremonial use and the painting of the bark walls of temporary dwellings (Berndt & Berndt 1988: 422-423; Groger-Wurm 1973: 8-10; Mountford 1956: 8; Ryan 1990: 1; Taylor 1982: 25). Also, many have also argued that bark paintings functioned as educational tools and the means by which an artist could gain access to secret knowledge and, in turn, ritual status (Altmann 1982: 15).
Bark painting appears to be executed under traditional constraints associated with rights of inheritance, age and sex. Morphy (1987: 18), McCarthy (1974: 39) and Warner (1937: 136) are three researchers who have argued that these constraints are consistent with those relating to other media. Morphy (1987: 18) has stated that Indigenous Australian designs are owned and that this ownership is related to social structure which can be expected to vary throughout the continent in correlation to changes in societies. Within a wide repertoire of designs each artist will have a number of designs that are exclusively their own. Cooke (1982: 27) and Taylor (1982: 25) have contended that artists are usually senior men who have a prominent role in ritual. Mountford (1956: 15) noted in 1948 that he “did not meet an aboriginal who could not, or did not want to paint. There is certainly no special artist class”.

It is believed, however, that Europeans introduced to the Indigenous cultures in Arnhem Land the notion of bark paintings as permanent and saleable objects (Crocker 1987: 26; Ryan 1990: 1; Smith 1988: 295). It is likely, therefore, that bark paintings have undergone a change in function according to this change in circumstances. Most researchers agree that the main incentive to produce bark paintings today is monetary (Altman 1982: 14; Crocker 1987: 26; Dussart 1988: 36).

The first collections of bark paintings in Australia were acquired from bark shelters in the Port Essington region in 1878 and were the works of the Iwaidja language group. Six years later, Captain Carrington collected five paintings from Field Island. Ryan (1990: 14) stated that none of these and other nineteenth century collections are said to have been commissioned. Spencer is often credited with being the first patron of Aboriginal art, when in 1912 he commissioned (and traded tobacco for) a series of large bark paintings from Oenpelli representing the rock art that he had observed. Another anthropological collector of influence in Arnhem Land was Lloyd Warner who, between 1926 and 1929, collected a number of paintings from the Yolngu at Milingimbi Island. Donald Thomson also compiled an extensive collection of ethnographic artefacts including bark paintings primarily from Yirrkala and Milingimbi Island in the 1930s and 1940s (Ryan 1990: 14).

In the late 1940s, Ronald and Catherine Berndt collected bark paintings from around Arnhem Land and importantly showed a change in the detail recorded about the artists and interpretations. Other important collectors included Reverend Dyer between 1920 and 1930 from Groote Eylandt.
and Oenpelli; Miss Mathews in the 1930s from Goulburn Island in the 1930s; and Fred Gray and Fred Rose from Groote Eylandt between 1938 and 1945. In the 1940s Leonard Adam collected from Groote Eylandt and Milingimbi Island (Brittain 1990: 7; Ryan 1990: 16). Most of the artefacts are today held in museums around Australia.

The idea of Indigenous art as “fine art” is a fairly new development with most people not considering it as such until after World War Two (Jones 1988; Morphy 1987; Morphy 1991; Taylor 1988). Before this, few Indigenous paintings were held in art galleries in Australia but were rather restricted to ethnographic collections of museums of natural history (see Chapter Seven; Morphy 1991: 22).

**Painting on Bark**

During the 1948 expedition, bark paintings were produced using four materials. These were: red, yellow, black and white pigment, fixative, brushes and flat dried sheets of bark. Most of the pigment on Groote Eylandt was obtained locally, except the red, which was traded from the mainland. The Indigenous people of Groote Eylandt were using carbon from dry batteries discarded by the RAAF following World War Two as a source of black. Most of the bark paintings collected from Groote Eylandt have this black background (see Plates 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, and 8.4). At Yirrkala, red, white, and yellow and black pigment was used in painting. Oenpelli communities obtained most of their red, yellow and black by trade. Though both Spencer (1928: 792) and Tindale (1926: 117) found that the Indigenous painters mixed pigments to get different shades, Mountford (1956: 10-11) stated that the different shades of ochre in the AASEAL paintings are a result of the different stones of red and yellow ochre rather than any mixing.

The juice of one of the tree orchids (*dendrobium* sp.) was used as a fixative for all of the AASEAL bark paintings. At least three different types of brushes were used for painting (see Figure 8.1). These included a narrow strip of bark, chewed at one end, a cylindrical stick and a brush made of palm leaf or a small feather (Mountford 1956: 11-12). Setzler (3.5.48:1) also
Plate 8.2: Bark painting "The Snake Woman Jiningbirna" from Groote Eylandt by Neningirukwa held in the AGNSW [PS. 1956]
Plate 8.3: Bark painting “Dugong Hunt” from Groote Eylandt by Jabarrgwa (Kneepad) Wurrabadallumba held in the AGNSW [P6.1956]
Plate 8.4: Bark painting “Dinungkwulangwawa (Dugongs)” from Groote Eylandt by Kulprati held in the AGNSW [P1.1956]
Figure 8.1 Techniques and Tools of Bark Painting (Mountford 1956: 12)
recorded that the painters used chicken feathers as brushes. The sheets of bark were stripped from the local stringy-bark trees (*Eucalyptus tetradora*). After the bark was cut, it was left on a fire for a short time, stripped of its outer fibres, placed on a leveled patch of sand with more sand covering it and left to flatten. Mountford (1956: 13) stated that this drying practice took from several days to a fortnight.

**The Provenance of Bark Paintings**

As stated early in this chapter, 484 bark paintings are known to have been collected during AASEAL. Considering the primary aim of this study was to determine influences on collecting practices and, in turn, institutional collections, the first part of this analysis deals with the place of collection for bark paintings (see Figure 3.1). This is to determine whether biases towards particular locations exist in the overall collection.

Figure 8.2 illustrates the number of paintings collected from each location and can be used to determine whether distinct biases in the provenance of bark paintings exist in the AASEAL collection. The three base camps, visited for approximately two months each, dominate as collection centres. Considerably less time was spent, and less material was collected, at Milingimbi Island and the Liverpool River Region. As discussed in Chapter Seven (Appendix D), it is likely that a misunderstanding has occurred in regard to the Liverpool River Region and Bremer Island paintings and that, in fact, they were collected elsewhere. As the individual institutional catalogues still list the place of collection as Liverpool River and Bremer Island this attribution has been left for this analysis, however, the previously mentioned problems should be noted.

Figure 8.3 illustrates the number of bark paintings collected from each base camp in the order in which they were collected or, in other words, the number collected from Groote Eylandt (March to July), Yirrkala (July to September) and Oenpelli (September to November). All of the base camps for AASEAL yielded similar numbers of bark paintings. This phenomenon may be passed over as a coincidence, however, if it is not a coincidence, then the results may influence ideas proposed in Chapter Five of this thesis. In short, it is possible that Mountford may have planned to collect similar numbers of bark paintings from each of the base camps and had not gone into the field with few predetermined collection strategies (see Chapter Five). Likewise, it is possible that
Mountford’s experience of collecting on Groote Eylandt may have led to the collection strategies employed in other locations.
Provenance of Bark Paintings Collected During AASEAL

- Groote Eylandt (31.6%)
- Oenpelli (29.5%)
- Yirrkala (28.9%)
- Milingimbi Island (4.8%)
- Not Specified (2.5%)
- Liverpool River Region (2.5%)
- Bremer Island (0.2%)

Figure 8.2: Provenance of Bark Paintings Collected During AASEAL

Number of Bark Paintings Collected from the Three Base Camps for AASEAL

- Groote Eylandt (March - July): 153
- Yirrkala (July - September): 140
- Oenpelli (September - November): 143

Figure 8.3: Bark paintings collected from the three base camps showing the changes in collection numbers as AASEAL progressed
From the figures depicted it can be seen that the collection of bark paintings was not significantly increasing or decreasing as the expedition progressed (see Figure 8.3). This is perhaps surprising, as it would be expected that factors such as transportation and storage would have meant a decrease in collection through time. In line with this, the following analysis of paintings on paper aims to determine whether the introduction of paper as a medium for painting influenced the collection of bark paintings. The number of bark paintings from these locations may simply represent the raw material available at each location, thus, an analysis of bark and paper paintings together can explore these ideas.

**The Collection of Bark Paintings in relation to those on Paper**

Paintings on paper were collected from five of the same locations as bark paintings (see Figure 8.4). Predictably, major differences are obvious in the numbers of bark and paper paintings collected from each of these locations (see Figure 8.5). Most paintings on paper were collected from Oenpelli with only one specimen from Groote Eylandt. This is in contrast to bark paintings, which were primarily collected from Groote Eylandt. One reason for this difference may be that Mountford had not foreseen at the first camp the problems with transportation that would occur from collecting a large number of bark paintings and that he was, therefore, collecting larger numbers earlier in the expedition. Likewise, it may reflect a more abundant supply of bark on Groote Eylandt.

Mountford stated that, “as the supply of prepared sheets of bark at Yirrkalla (sic) and Oenpelli became exhausted, I provided the artists with sheets of rough-surfaced dark grey and green paper” (Mountford 1956: 13). Other researchers have argued that, along with the problems with supplies, which Mountford acknowledges, transportation was a motivation for the use of paper. Neale (1998: 212) stated that the use of paper was, “a pragmatic decision based on the scarcity of bark during the dry season and the inconvenience of transporting such large numbers of works”.

As Mountford (1956: 13) stated, paper was used because bark was not available as easily at the second and third base camps. It is also possible that paper was used while the bark was still being prepared for painting. As stated earlier, the drying alone took, “several days to a fortnight” to complete and Mountford may have been anxious to continue his collecting (Mountford 1956: 13).
Provenance of Paintings on Paper Collected During AASEAL

Figure 8.4: Provenance of paintings on paper collected during AASEAL

Provenance of Bark and Paper Paintings Collected During AASEAL

Figure 8.5: A comparison of the number of bark paintings and the number of paintings on paper collected from each location during AASEAL
If transportation was a consideration then the sharp jump in collection of paintings on paper at Yirrkala and Oenpelli should have coincided with a significant decrease in the collection of bark paintings in these centres, (see Figure 8.6) which was not the case. It would seem logical that if Mountford was concerned with transport, he would not simply collect extra paintings on paper but, rather, decrease the number of paintings on bark.

Contrary to the historical records, this analysis suggests Mountford intended to gain examples of art on paper during AASEAL. This is backed by the fact that the ethnologist took specific paper for painting with him to Arnhem Land for the purpose of painting. He, therefore, was either predicting that bark would be scarce at times or he intended to gain examples of art on this medium.

In short, two issues appear to emerge from this analysis of the collection of bark and paper paintings. Firstly, the historical evidence and the physical evidence chiefly suggest he was using paper as a “second-class” alternative to bark for painting. This analysis alone would suggest that he was collecting paintings on paper as examples of this type of art, however, the historical evidence disagrees with this idea suggesting they were instead, an alternative when the supply of bark ceased.

Secondly, it was the imagery that motivated Mountford’s collecting rather than the medium. This is indicated by the historical records in which he labels paintings on paper as “bark paintings” (Mountford 1956). The ethnologist’s only acknowledgement that these paintings are actually undertaken on paper (see Plates 8.5 and 8.6) and not bark is in a footnote early in the records, which states, “the paintings on these sheets of paper can be distinguished in the illustrations by the smooth ground” (Mountford 1956: 13). This lack of acknowledgement for another art medium could be seen as evidence that he considered the designs those of bark paintings. The fact that any paintings on paper were collected during AASEAL would seem to argue in favour of the aforementioned theory.

If Mountford was concerned with collecting paintings on bark because of the medium, then it is suggested that the collection of paintings on paper would have been futile and, in turn, not undertaken. Had Mountford been an archaeologist, concerned with materials, this collection of paintings on paper may have been considered less valuable and a corruption of the traditional
Figure 8.6: A comparison of the number of bark paintings and the number of paintings on paper collected from each base camp during AASEAL.
Plate 8.5: Painting on paper “The Eagle-Rays” from Oenpelli by unknown artist. Possibly held in the AGNSW [P20.1956] (Mountford 1956: 261, pl. 83A)

Plate 8.6: Painting on paper “The Man, Nimbawah” from Oenpelli by an unknown artist held in the AGNSW [P21.1956] (Mountford 1956: 222, pl. 65B)
form. In other words, Mountford was collecting art rather than artefacts and, therefore, the use of paper was not a problem. This is by no means a criticism of his training but rather an observation that gives insights into the formation of collections from AASEAL (see Chapter Seven). The phenomenon of painting on paper and, in turn, the transferring of cultural norms across media also indicates the adaptable and dynamic culture from whom they were collecting.

The Collectors of Bark Paintings

Figure 8.7 outlines proportions of bark paintings acquired by the collectors from AASEAL. The initial concern with these figures is not having, in some cases, the historical records to indicate the collector. In some cases, this could be overcome or the possibilities reduced to only two individuals, if the place of collection was given. For example, those bark paintings which are known to have originated from Milingimbi Island must have been collected by either Setzler and McCarthy during their three-week visit or were sent by Reverend Ellemor to Mountford on request (see Chapter Five and Figure 8.7).

Unfortunately, 9.7% of the bark paintings can only be narrowed-down to Mountford or McCarthy. It would be easy to assume that, given Mountford’s main occupation during the expedition was to collect bark paintings, many of this 9.7% are the result of his work. This, however, cannot be stated without significant doubt. The degree of error that this lack of information leads to is significant, however, it does not discount the findings in the following analysis. Certainly 47 bark paintings is a considerable share of the collection, however, the fact they are the result of the two primary collectors means that large enough samples are left to analysis their actions and determine trends.

Mountford collected at least 341 or 70.5% of all bark paintings from AASEAL (see Figure 8.7). This number confirms with the details regarding Mountford’s intentions for collecting a large number of paintings during the expedition and McCarthy’s suggestions regarding the leader’s aims (see Chapter Five). This phenomenon may also illustrate why many of the institutions such as the National Gallery of Victoria and the Queensland Art Gallery, holding material from the 1948 expedition have labelled it the “Mountford Collection” (Neale 1998: 216; Ryan 2000: 1). On the other hand, this simply may be a reflection of contemporary museum practices with
Collectors of Bark Paintings During AASEAL

- Mountford (70.5%)
- McCarthy (12.8%)
- McCarthy or Mountford (9.7%)
- Ellemor for Mountford or Setzler and McCarthy (2.9%)
- Setzler (2.3%)
- Ellemor for Mountford (1.4%)
- Setzler and McCarthy (0.4%)

Figure 8.7: Percentage of bark paintings collected by each individual during AASEAL
recognition bestowed on the collector. Likewise, this acknowledgment may have been given to the collector when the artist details were not available.

McCarthy’s collection of 62 or 12.8% of the bark paintings is overshadowed by Mountford’s endeavour (see Figure 8.7). Though originally permitted to collect only fifteen bark paintings for the Australian Museum, McCarthy was granted leave to collect more after forcing the issue with Mountford (see Chapter Five; McCarthy 19.5.48).

Another 14 or 2.9% of the collection was acquired from Milingimbi Island with no collector recorded. This means that the paintings were collected either by Setzler and McCarthy or Reverend Ellemor for Mountford (see Chapter Five). Individually, Setzler collected 11 or 2.3% of the bark paintings. This small number may reflect Setzler’s interest in archaeology rather than ethnology (see Chapter Five). It is interesting that the archaeologist was collecting bark paintings at all, and this may indicate a somewhat easy-going atmosphere of collecting that was occurring in the field. It is also possible that the historical records are wrong considering that all records that mention his collection of bark paintings are in the Smithsonian Institution (his home institution). It is possible that they have mistakenly recorded their archaeologist as collector for artefacts in the absence of more detail. Likewise, this institution may have recorded those bark paintings collected by Setzler and McCarthy together, as purely Setzler’s. This institution also has Setzler recorded as “donor” for many of the artefacts from the 1948 expedition when, in truth, they were donated by the Commonwealth Government of Australia.

Reverend Ellemor definitely collected five or 1% of the bark paintings from Milingimbi Island on request from Mountford (see Chapter Five). It is only known for certain that Setzler and McCarthy collected two or 0.4% of the bark paintings during their visit to Milingimbi Island. This number would almost certainly be decreased because of the aforementioned 14 bark paintings from Milingimbi Island without any known collectors (see Figure 8.7).

The Role of the Collector in Forming Institutional Collections

To determine the influence of the collector on the formation of institutional collections of bark paintings from AASEAL, the Australian Museum, the Smithsonian Institution and the South Australian Museum’s collections will be analysed in terms of collectors. In other words, the three institutions with representations on AASEAL and with three large collections of bark paintings will be analysed to determine the influence of the collector on the composition of their AASEAL
collection. The crucial aspect of this analysis is whether selection by individuals in the field translates to the numbers of paintings accessioned by their institution.

**The Australian Museum**

Figure 8.8 illustrates the percentage of bark paintings held in the Australian Museum and collected by each individuals during AASEAL. When compared with Figure 8.7 it reveals that this institution received paintings collected mainly by Fred McCarthy and, therefore, by their representative on AASEAL.

Due to the lack of information surrounding some of the bark paintings held in the Australian Museum, 41.3% of these artefacts can only be allocated to either McCarthy or Mountford. It is possible, therefore, that McCarthy collected up to 98.2% of the bark paintings held by the Australian Museum. It is considered unlikely, however, that Mountford did not collect at least some of the 41.3%. Setzler and McCarthy acquired 0.9% of the Australian Museum collection while based on Milingimbi Island and Mountford alone acquired the remaining 0.9%.

It is interesting, considering 70.5% of all bark paintings were collected by Mountford, that only 0.9% of the Australian Museum’s collection can be attributed to the leader (see Figure 8.8). Likewise, McCarthy only collected 12.8% of all bark paintings, yet, his representation in the Australian Museum’s collection is 56.9% (see Figure 8.8). These facts would appear to suggest that the bark paintings received by the Australian Museum were largely dependent on the collection that their representative made.

**The Smithsonian Institution**

Figure 8.9 illustrates that Frank Setzler (the Smithsonian Institution’s representative) only collected a small portion (12%) of the bark paintings today held by the Smithsonian Institution. Mountford dominates the Smithsonian Institution’s collection of bark paintings with 86.8%. There is also 1.1%, which have no details for the collector. From details, associated with the provenance, it is known that they were collected either by McCarthy or Mountford.

Though Setzler’s contribution may seem small in comparison to Mountford, it is important that all 11 or 100% of the bark paintings Setzler collected during the 1948 expedition are held in the Smithsonian Institution.
Collectors of Bark Paintings from AASEAL held in the Australian Museum

- McCarthy (56.9%)
- McCarthy or Mountford (41.3%)
- Setzler and McCarthy (0.9%)
- Mountford (0.9%)

Figure 8.8: Collectors of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the Australian Museum

Collectors of Bark Paintings from AASEAL held by the Smithsonian Institution

- Mountford (86.7%)
- Setzler (12.2%)
- McCarthy or Mountford (1.1%)

Figure 8.9: Collectors of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the Smithsonian Institution

Collectors of Bark Paintings from AASEAL held in the South Australian Museum

- Mountford (96.1%)
- Ellemor for Mountford (3.9%)

Figure 8.10: Collectors of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the South Australian Museum
The South Australian Museum

The collector statistics from the South Australian Museum shown in Figure 8.10 are very different to those of the other two institutions. Mountford collected 96.1% of all of the bark paintings held in the South Australian Museum (see Figure 8.10). The other 3.9% were “ordered” by Mountford and collected on his behalf by Reverend Ellemor. The lack of bark paintings collected by other researchers such as Setzler and McCarthy in the South Australian Museum collection can be seen as a direct result of these researchers taking their collections to their own institutions.

Mountford’s large representation in the South Australian Museum’s collection is evidence that the material received by this institution was largely dependent on the collection that their representative made. In the case of the ethnologist, however, only 29% of the bark paintings he collected are held in his “home” institution. Mountford’s ties with the South Australian Museum were very different to those McCarthy and Setzler had with their museums. Mountford was Honorary Associate in Ethnology at the South Australian Museum and, in 1948, was employed by the Commonwealth Government of Australia as a filmmaker and lecturer (see Chapter Three). In terms of collecting, his loyalty lay with this South Australian institution, however, he also had responsibilities to the Commonwealth Government in terms of pleasing the United States (Lamshed 1972: 110-111; Mountford 1956: ix; Mountford 1975: 225). This accounts for the greater distribution of bark paintings collected by Mountford.

The Distribution of Bark Paintings

Ten institutions today hold bark paintings from AASEAL and it is not surprising that the three institutions with anthropological, archaeological or ethnological representatives received the largest number (see Figure 8.11). How the bark paintings would be distributed was not clear before the researchers entered the field in early 1948 (see Chapters Six). Promises had been made regarding “representative” samples being supplied to the major institutions (the Smithsonian Institution and the Australian Museum), yet, it appears that no firm agreements by those other than Mountford, McCarthy and Setzler.

The process of distribution has been discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis and will not be reiterated here. It is worthy of note that four museums received the largest number of bark paintings. These are the Australian Museum, the South Australian Museum, the Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum of Australia. The first three institutions mentioned received
Institutions Holding Bark Paintings from AASEAL

Figure 8.11: Distribution of AASEAL bark paintings to institution
their collection almost immediately following AASEAL and, as discussed earlier, were largely the result of their representatives collecting. The similar numbers held by each may also reflect a division which must have occurred in the field between the representatives of these institutions and, in turn, represent the undertaking of the promises made prior to the expedition regarding representative samples being lodged in the United States and in Australia (see Chapter Five).

The National Museum of Australia was the last to receive their collection following the closure of the Australian Institute of Anatomy in 1984. The six art galleries featured in Figure 8.11 were given the opportunity to choose their bark paintings in 1956 and were allowed only 12. The differences in number are discussed in Chapter Six, however, in many cases no records were located for this study suggesting why these galleries today hold more or less bark paintings. The Art Gallery of South Australia’s enlarged number is well documented and is the result of trade and gifts from Mountford following AASEAL.

**The Distribution of Bark Paintings in Relation to those on Paper**

The distribution of bark paintings to different institutions is presented in Figure 8.12 in relation to the numbers of paintings on paper. In eight of the ten institutions, bark paintings were more common than paintings on paper. This is not unexpected as, in general, many more bark paintings were collected than paintings on paper. Only the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the Art Gallery of New South Wales hold more paintings on paper from this expedition than bark paintings. This is probably due to their selection at the meeting in 1956 or, in other words, their preference for paintings on paper over paintings on bark (see Chapter Six).

The Australian Museum and the Smithsonian Institution are the only museums to hold no paintings on paper at all from AASEAL and considering they hold 109 and 91 bark paintings respectively this is an obvious overlooking of the art form. The South Australian Museum holds 11 paintings on paper and 103 bark paintings. The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery also hold no paintings on paper while their bark paintings number 17. These small or zero numbers could be seen as simply reflecting the smaller numbers that were collected, however, when compared with the percentages of bark and paper paintings held in galleries around Australia, a wider theme appears (see Figure 8.12). From this data it would appear that museums were favouring bark over paper and art galleries paper over bark.

From a discussion in Chapter Seven of art as artefact it was suggested that art galleries and
Figure 8.12: A comparison of the number of bark paintings and the number of paintings on paper from AASEAL held by different institutions.
museums were in a period of transition regarding the acquisition of paintings. Art galleries were not willing to consider Indigenous art as equal to the other “fine art” they held and museums were uncertain how to deal with paintings on an “inauthentic” medium such as paper.

It may be for this reason that 62.8% of the paintings on paper collected are today held in art galleries when only 20.7% of bark paintings are today held in art galleries (see Figures 8.13 and 8.14). In this way, Figures 8.12, 8.13 and 8.14 may reveal aspects of the nature of art galleries and museums (see Chapter Seven).

It would seem appropriate here to refer back briefly to a discussion in Chapter Six regarding the dispersal of the paintings. After the museums had received their selections of paintings, the Commonwealth Government still had numerous bark and paper paintings “left-over” (Murphy 23.5.55: 2). At a meeting held on March 24, 1955, it was decided that each of the six state art galleries would receive 12 bark paintings and 12 paintings on paper from this expedition (Anonymous 24.3.55: 1).

From this information it could be concluded that the bias towards paper in art galleries was not of their choosing. Rather, it was forced upon them by having to select from the paintings not kept by museums and, in turn, their bias reflects the opposite bias of museums. It also reflects that galleries were told how many of each type of painting they were allowed to select. Certainly, there is little proof that these strict conditions were adhered to, however, there is no proof, except the different numbers today held by these institutions, that they were not. In this way, Campbell (in Neale 1998: 210) who commented that he was keen to select paintings before the anthropological people picked and he got the leftovers, was wrong in thinking galleries were being favoured over museums. Rather, the idea of these galleries being offered Indigenous Australian art at all was the unusual factor.

In short, it would appear that the cultural and disciplinary biases of the collectors largely influenced the forms that institutional collections take today. There is little doubt that the large number of bark paintings collected during the 1948 expedition was due to Mountford’s eagerness to obtain such a collection. There is also little doubt that he had a huge influence over the dispersal of the paintings and, therefore, the institutional collections that exist today. Mountford’s choice, however, to collect bark paintings would appear to have been based on the desire to
Paintings on Paper from AASEAL held in Art Galleries

Figure 8.13: Percentage of the paintings on paper collected during AASEAL that are now held in art galleries

Bark Paintings from AASEAL held in Art Galleries

Figure 8.14: Percentage of the bark paintings collected during AASEAL that are now held in art galleries
obtain the imagery rather than the actual art form. His collection and replacement of bark with paper reflects this idea, as does his description of paper as bark in the publications resulting from AASEAL (Mountford 1956).

Mountford’s interest in Indigenous culture was largely based around art but he did not consider himself an anthropologist as much as a recorder of culture (Lamshed 1972: 159). Importantly, the ethnologist believed artistic expression could be studied independently of social organisation, a view scorned by his trained colleagues (Elliott 1992: 7). This may be reflected in his eagerness to collect artistic forms of expression and his lack of concern at using paper or bark to produce this art. Mountford believed that someone could better interpret this art in the future and his concern was in preservation so that future research could be conducted.

The preferences of museums, however, seems to differ from the preferences of Mountford. These institutions desired the form rather than the art. Certainly the 11 paintings on paper kept by the South Australian Museum seem to support this theory, however, being that this was Mountford’s home institution it would be easy to say that he influenced this decision with his indifferent attitude towards medium.

In theory, art galleries should have had very little in-put into the type of paintings they acquired from AASEAL. These institutions were promised 12 bark paintings and 12 paintings on paper and there is no historical evidence to suggest that they received different numbers. The difference emerges in the vastly different numbers of paintings art galleries hold from AASEAL today. They also contain a mixed percentage of bark and paper paintings.

**Provenance of Bark Paintings in Institutional Collections**

To determine whether trends exist in the provenance of bark paintings held in each institution, all museums and art galleries holding bark paintings from AASEAL will now be discussed individually. A description of the type, number of provenance of all bark paintings collected during AASEAL can be seen in Appendix L.

The locations from which these men were collecting proved to be of importance in the construction of institutional collections. The most important conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is that art galleries hold collections biased towards Groote Eylandt. The reasons for this deserve greater discussion. It could be suggested that this reflects the lack of interest in paintings
from Groote Eylandt by museums (as the art galleries had second choice of paintings). The fact that a considerable number of paintings from Groote Eylandt also occur in the Commonwealth Government of Australia’s collection, kept in the South Australian Museum until 1956 and now in the National Museum of Australia, would support this theory (as the National Museum of Australia received the paintings not wanted by the relevant museum or the art galleries). If this lack of interest in Groote Eylandt paintings was the reason, however, it would be expected that less paintings from this area would be found in all of the museums, which is not the case. Only the South Australian Museum holds a considerably lower number of bark paintings from Groote Eylandt than from the other base camps. The issue can, therefore, safely be traced to Mountford.

It could perhaps be suggested that Mountford had reasons for not keeping bark paintings from Groote Eylandt in his study collection at the South Australian Museum while Setzler and McCarthy wanted only a representative sample of Arnhem Land bark paintings. Some reasons for Mountford’s disinterest may be that Groote Eylandt was not his research area or there was already a representative collection from this area in the South Australian Museum (such as Tindale’s 1921 collection). This selection may also be due to personal reasons such as Mountford’s preference for bark paintings from Yirrkala or Oenpelli over Groote Eylandt.

Whatever his reasons for not including a representative collection of Groote Eylandt bark paintings in the South Australian Museum collection, this decision influenced the representation of indigenous art in galleries throughout Australia. Mountford’s decision meant that the Commonwealth Government was left with an abundance of paintings from this region and, hence, art galleries were choosing their specimens from a biased collection. The National Museum of Australia’s collection also illustrates these actions with more than twice the number of bark paintings from Groote Eylandt than any other location visited.

**Conclusions**

The numerous collections of bark paintings, which have resulted from AASEAL, were influenced by many more factors than could be determined in one thesis. They include factors such as regional variation, artistic ability, age of artist, time allocated to each individual artwork, the aims of the Indigenous artists and so forth. This study relates to the collectors and their western institutions rather than the Indigenous communities in their own environment. The two primary areas analysed in this chapter are the influence of the collector and the influence of the institutions for which they were collecting on the formation of AASEAL collections. In
particular, this analysis has highlighted links between the collector, the place of collection, the collection of paintings on paper and the institutional collections that exist today.

To begin with the nature of the institution, art galleries received different numbers and types of bark paintings than museums. These institutions almost certainly had some, if not all, power over the artefacts they received (see Chapter Six).

For art galleries, the sample they were choosing specimens from was skewed towards Groote Eylandt primarily due to the actions of Mountford and, therefore, the institutions cannot be singled out as selecting from particular areas and artistic styles. The interesting aspect of this has more to do with the type of painting and the medium rather than their number or provenance. In four of the six galleries (including the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery which was treated, for the purposes of distribution, as a gallery) bark is more common than paper. This was a deliberate act to gain paintings on this medium by these galleries which, in some cases, included acquiring their first Indigenous art. Likewise, this analysis has shown the influence that the museums had on the constitution of art gallery collections. In particular, Mountford’s choices, in terms of type, number and provenance to return to the Commonwealth Government of Australia from the South Australian Museum for distribution (see Chapters Six and Seven).

The actual collection of paintings on paper has also been discussed in this chapter with some results, which were predicted in Chapter Five. Paper was used as a replacement for bark when resources ran out in Yirrkala and Oenpelli. It is unlikely that transport or storage issues had any influence on its use considering the stable number of bark paintings that were being collected. Mountford’s willingness to use paper again suggests that it was the imagery he was interested in rather than the medium, which many considered “inauthentic” (see Chapter Seven). It is almost ironic that Mountford was collecting for a museum, an institution that, from this analysis, appears to have rejected paintings on paper in favour of the more “traditional” medium of bark.

The second factor is the cultural and disciplinary biases of the institution’s representative. Perhaps it would be easier to state that it was the personalities of the collectors, which influenced collections but, either way, the meaning is the same. In many cases their individual aims and disciplinary backgrounds have influenced not only their home institution, but also the formation of other institutional collections and, in turn, the representation of Indigenous art in Australia. Mountford, McCarthy and, to a lesser extent, Setzler were the three primary collectors of bark
paintings during this expedition. They brought their own experience, aims and awareness to the field and collected bark paintings in line with these ideas.

Though it was by no means intended to analyse the personalities of these men, their training and roles in society certainly had an impact on their collection strategies. In terms of bark paintings, this analysis has shown that the two other collectors understood that this artefact was the realm of Mountford and tried to keep clear of its collection. Naturally, McCarthy desired a collection for the Australian Museum of this artefact and, in turn, negotiated with Mountford to collect a small number. As a result of this, the Australian Museum is the only institution that Mountford did not have a significant influence over. Their collection of bark paintings represent the selections of a social anthropologist rather than a collector and all of the communities visited are represented.
Conclusions

What it accomplished is said to have been scientifically considerable, but is not measurable now, and perhaps never will be. Such findings take years to write and codify and publish and disseminate. When that is completed, the use of them is only at the beginning (Simpson 1951: 40).

Introduction

Traditionally, this thesis should not have been written for at least another fifty years. To analyse a collection formed only fifty-two years ago, when some of the collectors are still living, seems premature and may be frightening for those who expected to be dead before becoming part of the archaeological record. Despite these fears, this project is not intended as an *ad hominem* criticism of those who came before but rather emphasises some of the changes that have and have not occurred in the disciplines of Archaeology, Anthropology, Museology and Material culture studies.

It was the aim of this thesis to determine Western influences on the composition of the AASEAL ethnographic collections. Instead of choosing to analyse areas of influence such as regional variation, manufacturer or artistic skill, style or method of production, it was decided to concentrate upon the bias of the collector and the influence of the institution receiving the artefacts. Furthermore, this will assist future researchers in determining the other aspects of influence not covered in this thesis.

Artefacts can be studied using a variety of methods depending on the information that needs to be extracted. The ideas suggested in this study from the material evidence can be backed-up or dismissed by the large amount of historical evidence that has survived. Together these sources have shown some trends which can assist in further understanding human nature. Rodrigues (1999: 187) has stated that, “it should always be remembered that the processes involved in forming a site must be taken into careful consideration because it is these processes which created the archaeological record”. This stands true also for collections, which are often analysed in similar ways to an archaeological site.
If the AASEAL ethnographic collection was to be considered an artefact assemblage or archaeological site, then it has a number of manufacturers including the Indigenous manufacturers, the white collectors and the museum or art galleries that curated the artefacts so collected. It is, therefore, both a product of Indigenous culture and Western culture in the 1940s. As this study is concerned with the Western influence, the artefacts were analysed to see if trends occurred in the collection and whether inferences could be made regarding the biases of the Western researchers and institutions. This, in turn, can assist in reaching a greater understanding about the Indigenous impact by eliminating those outside influences.

**Significance of Research Findings**

When assessing the significance of the findings from this study, the question must first be asked – significance for whom? In essence this study grew out of a recent suggestion from Tuhiwai Smith (1999: 58-59) who asserted, “it is through these disciplines that the Indigenous world has been represented to the West and it is through these disciplines that Indigenous peoples often re-search for the fragments of ourselves which were taken, catalogued, studied and stored”. She is here referring to disciplines such as Anthropology and Archaeology and, in turn, her words could encompass the AASEAL ethnographic collection.

It is clear that the people in the Arnhem Land communities visited during AASEAL were “recorded” alongside of the flora and the fauna of the region. Their photographs were taken, their movements recorded, their implements and creations collected and the findings published – for the benefit of the West. To a large extent the Indigenous people were a pawn in a game being played by the Commonwealth Government of Australia (see Chapters Three and Five). They used these people to further political and social goals such as publicity while disregarding the impact this would have upon the communities. More importantly for this study are the individual researchers who were conceivably forerunners of generations of archaeologists and anthropologists who made a living exploiting Indigenous culture. By appropriating Indigenous artefacts, AASEAL researchers gained kudos and perhaps promotion within their institutions as well as outside recognition.

The most obvious uses of this study for Indigenous communities are two-fold. Firstly, the knowledge that it provides on the present distribution of the collections and an understanding of the role it played and continues to play in Western culture. Secondly, the findings, which an
analysis of the ethnographic collection and the collection of bark paintings has offered, may be of use. In short, aspects such as representation of Indigenous cultures in museums and art galleries, the changing role of Indigenous artefacts in Western culture and, specifically, museums and art galleries, may assist in their understanding of the significance of this expedition and the collections.

Despite the obvious negative aspects that plague AASEAL, it should also be declared that this expedition provided a unique opportunity for these Indigenous communities who were, by 1948, well aware of the desires of the Western researchers. The wish for an ethnographic collection placed these Indigenous communities in a situation of power in a variety of ways and, in turn, they made the most of these opportunities gaining money, food and goods (albeit in small amounts) in return for a number of services.

It seems almost contradictory now to turn the discussion to one of significance for archaeological researchers. Most would agree, however, that an understanding of the significance of the expedition, the ethnographic collection and thesis you are reading have had on archaeology will assist in understanding the consequences for Indigenous communities both in the 1940s and today.

Much of this thesis has been concerned with an understanding of the phenomenon of collecting. Foucault (1986: 26) has stated, “the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place at all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organising in this a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity”. This also means that Modernism manifested itself in the form of collecting. In this context emerges a primary candidate for an important theoretical awareness surrounding the 1948 expedition - Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism, one of the meta-narratives developed in the modernist climate, importantly led to classification. This, in turn, meant people collected and arranged their material to support these theories with “scientific evidence”.

The influence of Social Darwinism and the “evolutionary ladder”, placed Indigenous Australians on rungs lower than the Western colonisers, meant that the AASEAL researchers came to Arnhem Land with certain beliefs affecting their work (Griffiths 1996: 10). A belief that the
cultures they were studying were soon to be lost, primarily through outside influences meant a sense of urgency underlined the collection of material culture. Though all of these theoretical influences had come into question through other investigations, this has still proven to be the primary cultural understanding surrounding the 1948 expedition. The most obvious evidence of this is in the disappointment felt by members of AASEAL on discovering their “stone-age men” wearing jeans, playing cards and using American slang.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the institution receiving artefacts from AASEAL had a significant impact on the composition of their institutional collection and, in some cases, other collections. Most of the ethnographic artefacts were received by museums. However, in terms of what Western researchers have called “art” artefacts such as bark and paper paintings, art galleries emerge as the primary repositories. Morphy (1998: 29) suggested that interest in Indigenous Australian art increased and changed following World War Two. He stated that researchers became interested in art as an expression of religious values rather than an indicator of evolutionary progress. This, in turn, contributed to changing views from one of Indigenous art as “primitive” to works by Indigenous artists being seen and admired for their aesthetic value (Morphy 1998: 26).

This study has shown that even in 1948, museums and art galleries were not yet willing to completely comply with this new phenomenon. Probably the most significant finding from this study is the realization that for many art galleries, AASEAL paintings were the first Indigenous art works acquired and they set the scene for future acquisitions. This emphasises the influence of these works in furthering and perhaps beginning a cognitive movement of Western society considering Indigenous art as equivalent to non-Indigenous art.

**Future Research**

Finally, the work conducted on the AASEAL ethnographic collection should only be seen as a basis for more extensive study, consisting of three factors. First, and most importantly, consultation with Indigenous communities visited by the expedition is essential. The lack of indigenous voices in the records and documentation of this expedition should be addressed in the near future. This consultation may also assist in determining the identity of the manufacturers of many of the artefacts collected and provide a further opportunity for the return of information to these communities.
Secondly, interviews with the surviving members of AASEAL should also be conducted considering that only three are known to still be living. These are Ray Specht, Margaret McArthur and Peter Basset-Smith. Specifically, the role of Margaret McArthur in the formation of the ethnographic collection is not stated anywhere in the historical records analysed for this study. It is predicted that her role was considerable especially in regard to the women in the communities and, if the records have failed to record this, an interview would seem essential.

Thirdly, the collections not relevant to this study but recorded in the database (Archaeology and Physical Anthropology) have not been seriously addressed and, thus, an analysis of the material (subject to Indigenous approval) would add to the understanding of, not only collection strategies but also re-introduce important material to the appropriate parties.

Conclusions

Finally, just as this study appears and reflects its cultural and theoretical context, so too does the AASEAL ethnographic collection. The researchers entered Arnhem Land with a cultural, economic and, sometimes, political background influencing their work. After the ethnographic artefacts had passed through this first filter, they were introduced to the biases of the institutions that were to store them for the benefit of the West. The influence, therefore, of these two “filters” is considerable in terms of representation.

Bennett (1995: 130) stated that, “just as the visitor to a National Park encounters the wilderness as a culturally organised text, so the visitor to a museum or historic site is confronted with a set of textually organised meanings whose determinations must be sought in the present”. It is clear that without an understanding of the processes involved in forming a collection such as AASEAL, human beings from all areas of society would view the materials as purely representing Indigenous culture in Arnhem Land during the 1940s. They would, therefore, probably gain a view of Arnhem Land cultures as people who spent 70% of their time painting on bark, carving figurines and killing animals or each other with highly decorated spears. Rather, it would seem timely to acknowledge that this is a construction of an Indigenous culture by the West and for the West rather than a true representation of the people from whom they were collecting.
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Appendix A

Historical Records for AASEAL in Washington, D.C.

The Smithsonian Anthropological Archives - The Setzler Files
There are 36 boxes of information pertaining to Frank Setzler’s career. The following is a list of those boxes containing information pertaining to the American-Australian Scientific Expedition.

Box 7:
1948 Arnhem Land Correspondence: memos to and from Mountford, newspaper clippings, financial reports, shipping arrangements for specimens. 1949: Letters to and from expedition members (particularly Frederick McCarthy)

Box 8:
Letters to and from expedition members (1950-1953)

Box 9:
Letters to and from expedition members (particularly Charles Mountford and Fred McCarthy) (1954-1960)

Box 14:
Three small notebooks/diaries written by Setzler.

Diary One contains Setzler’s notes from Umbakumba (particularly on F. H. Gray’s treatment of the Indigenous people), an inventory, a list of facial casts and a description of photographs taken (film packs #13 and #14) and a description of marriage laws.

Diary Two (approximately 100 pages) is his Australian itinerary and notes from January 1948 to December 1948. Also contains lists of box contents (for shipment to Smithsonian) and film packs. There are also archaeological notes from Winchelsea Island (June 2-7 1948), Bartalombo Basin Cave (June 7 1948), Yirrkala chipped points (June 23 1948), Milingimbi (2-20 August 1948) and Oenpelli (September 21 to November 2 1948).
Diary Three (approximately 46 pages) titled ‘FM Setzler/ Australia/ Ethnology/ Delissaville and Groote Eylandt’. Observations of “abos” (march 27 1948), observations of boomerang (march 29 1948), observations of Groote Eylandt (may 3 1948), making dugong ropes, description of trip to Ongarrjap, Field catalogue of bark paintings from Umbakumba (may 15 1948), observations on F.H. Gray’s work at Umbakumba, work schedule (may 5-11 1948), and notes on catching and preparing turtle.

Box 18:
Contains 100 glass lantern slides. A description of each is available in Vertical File Rm. 61-A, control number 36 - 3 of 7. These photographs show Setzler and his colleagues on their way to the expedition, during the expedition and leaving Arnhem Land. There are also photos of human remains (including painted skulls), plaster casts, making bark paintings, excavations, dances, camp settings, Indigenous people, archaeological specimens, and rock art.

Box 20:
Notebook describing Australian film and TV sequence for National Geographic Society. Lectures for National Geographic Society and list of lecture commitments.

Box 22:
Ethnological objects from Arnhem Land 8x10 prints (black and white glossy) and manuscripts. Details on ethnological specimens from Arnhem Land, bark paintings from Yirrkala, artefacts collected by Setzler, notes on human skeletal material, map of Australia, social organisation, Oenpelli, trepanging, material culture of Arnhem Land, ceremony at Oenpelli, suggestions for Regent’s dinner, and newspaper clippings.

Box 35:
Map of Australia, map of Port Bradshaw Island and topographical map of Darwin and environs. Aerial prints and negatives.

Box 36:
Drawings of excavations on Milingimbi Island (another very large trench map is stored appropriately elsewhere).
The Smithsonian Institution Archives
Holds the Accession file for the American-Australian Scientific Expedition. This file also includes numerous letters to and from expedition members.

The Registrars Office
Located in the Museum of Natural History holds an abbreviated Accession File 178294 for the expedition with considerably less information than that held in the Smithsonian Archives.
Appendix B

AASEAL Database

Please contact author to obtain a copy of the AASEAL database. Currently still being improved.
Appendix C

Letter from NMA Concerning Elliott Report
Appendix D

Inaccurate Recording of Provenance for Some AASEAL Artefacts

Bickerton Island
It is unknown whether the researcher actually visited Bickerton Island or whether the material was brought from another location for trade.

Bremer Island
One bark painting (TMAG M5968) is recorded as having been collected from Bremer Island. If the researcher visited this location during the 1948 Expedition it is not recorded. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible, just unlikely that the provenance of this painting is correct. If the information is incorrect, the Expedition members are almost certainly not to blame, as they would know if they had visited. It could be suggested that the museum has mistaken this painting as coming from AASEAL. This argument is further assisted by the records of the Australian Institute of Anatomy, which list all of the paintings they received from the South Australian Museum. This is important because it was these paintings that were distributed to Art Galleries around Australia including the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, which today claims the singular Bremer Island bark painting from the 1948 Expedition. This list contains the place of collection for all of the paintings and none are from Bremer Island (Anonymous 16.2.50: 1-8).

Cape Stewart
Records suggest that 11 artefacts were collected from Cape Stewart. It is not recorded that the researchers actually visited Cape Stewart but it is known that men and women came from this area and traded with McCarthy and Setzler while they were working on Milingimbi Island. Setzler insinuated this stating, “after our excavations… we would return to our abode to find several Milingimbi natives and sometimes those from the mainland, such as Cape Stewart, waiting to barter their implements, baskets, even their highly prized ceremonial objects” (Setzler n.d.: 6). The labelling of these 11 artefacts as being collected from Cape Stewart is, therefore, likely to be inaccurate. Even the labelling of these artefacts as being the result of McCarthy’s collecting may be inaccurate as he was working with Setzler at this location.
**Delissaville**

Delissaville, located in Port Darwin, was not an official destination for AASEAL. Rather it is likely that these 11 artefacts were either collected in early 1948 before the Expedition members left Darwin for Groote Eylandt, or on return to Darwin from Oenpelli in November 1948.

**Liverpool River**

18 artefacts (12 bark paintings and 6 paintings on paper) are recorded as being collected from the Liverpool River Region. Despite records suggesting this as their place of collection, it is likely to be incorrect. As discussed briefly in Chapter Five, Liverpool River artists came to Oenpelli to produce bark paintings and paintings on paper for the researchers based at this location because the local indigenous artists were required for work killing and skinning water buffalo (Mountford 1956: 111). There are no reports of the Expedition members visiting this area. Though it cannot be stated for certain, it is most likely that Liverpool River artists are responsible for these paintings and that they were collected at Oenpelli. The fact that all of the artefacts are paintings would seem to agree with this argument.
Appendix E

Arguments Over Publication

Much of the historical evidence surviving from AASEAL illustrates the problems that occurred in relation to the publication of results. The main arguments appear to have been between Fred McCarthy (the Australian Museum) and Charles Mountford (the South Australian Museum). The following quotes highlight some of the reasons for this hostility:

“The insinuation that I intruded upon Mr. Mountford’s field of study of art and legends can be answered simply by stating that whatever I did was with his permission as leader of the Expedition” (McCarthy n.d.: 1).

“Might I suggest that it be pointed out to Mr. Mountford that a difficult situation has arisen in respect to the fact that he, as editor of the reports, is writing on the Chasm Island cave paintings according to his letter of 11th January, whilst I have described the paintings in a large number of sites on this island in a detailed and comparative systematic study, In these circumstances I do not feel disposed to submit my manuscript because it would place the editor in an invidious position” (McCarthy 8.6.51: 1).

“The claims made by Mountford are completely unfounded and incorrect, they are in fact downright unscientific. They demonstrate either a lack of understanding of the true value of records of superimposition in cave paintings, or a deliberate refusal to do so” (McCarthy 18.1.56: 1).

“I am sorry to say that, due to my refusal to accept some very poor work from McCarthy, and his attempt to use political pressure, vol. II will follow Ray Specht’s work Vol. III” (Mountford 16.3.57: 1).

“I’m sure we never realized the type of individual nor the uncanny methods such a person would use to promote his own ego. After all, you were the only one of the Australian group that he could not completely dominate. Unfortunately, he created a spell over Dr. Wetmore, who thinks he can do no wrong; moreover, N.G.S. does not want to interfere in another country’s affairs. In this connection, Dr. and Mrs. Gilbert Grosvenor, the originators of the N.G.S., now retired, are
planning a trip to Australia this fall. Perhaps you and the new director of your museum can urge the publication of vol. II” (Setzler 26.6.57: 1).

“It is obvious that Mountford’s statement to the US National Museum about my “very poor work” is for the purpose of discrediting me as his excuse for changing the order of publication of volumes II and III of the expedition reports” (McCarthy 10.7.57: 1).

“The assertion that I “have attempted to use political pressure” is a deliberate fabrication. The whole of the correspondence about the publication of papers has been conducted officially by Mountford, and not as it should be between author and editor. In this correspondence he has consistently exceeded his editorial rights by using every possible opportunity to disparage my work” (McCarthy 10.7.57: 1).

“The reasons for the change in the order of publication of the volumes are certainly not those given to the US National Museum by Mountford. I feel he should be reproved by the Department of News and Information, which is handling the Expedition reports, and request to withdraw the remarks in his unwarranted attack upon me” (McCarthy 10.7.57: 1).

“There are several reasons for Mountford’s hostility, as follow:

1. My refusal to grant him co-authorship of several papers (cave paintings of Chasm Id. To be separated from my main cave painting paper in the Expedition reports, and of two other papers published in our records) because I had done all of the work and he was not entitled in any way to joint authorship.

2. My analysis of Oenpelli cave painting sequences which he had failed to detect - he was extremely jealous of the work I did on cave paintings during the Expedition and has been critical of its results ever since.

3. The taking over from him of the Expedition’s collection of bark paintings, after the late Professor Nadel had asked me for information about this collection and other material held by Mountford from the Expedition. It should be recorded here that there are several hundreds of wood carvings, sacred objects, etc., illustrated in vol. I of the Expedition Records by Mountford that were concealed by him during the course of the expedition, and were not submitted for the sharing of the anthropological collection between the Australian Museum, U.S. National Museum, and the Commonwealth Government, although Mountford insisted as leader in taking his share of all other specimens. The Commonwealth Government took
possession of the bark paintings held by Mountford but I do not know whether it also secured the wood carvings, sacred objects, etc. held by him.” (McCarthy October 1957: 1).

“There has been a lot of acrimonious correspondence with Mr. Mountford over the Arnhem Land reports, but it is quite unjust that Mountford in this fashion should write about McCarthy’s work, and certainly he has never attempted to use political pressure in any way at all. The reasons for Mountford’s disparaging remarks are well-known to me and do him no credit” (Evans 15.8.57: 1).
Appendix F

Plaster Casts


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue No.</th>
<th>Field No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380 476</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hand of Thurinja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 477</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hand of Minimini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 478</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Face of Machana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 479</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Face of Korbija; Head: Length, 20 cm; breadth, 13.8 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 480</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Face of Kumbiala. Head; Length, 20.8 cm; breadth, 13.8 cm. Note: this cast is on display in the Museum of Natural History gift shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 481</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Face of Tamakidja (mother of #7 and #8). Head: length, 21 cm; breadth, 13.6 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 482</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Face of Tabaminja (daughter of #6; one of the wives of “Quart Pot,” Nangapianja). Head; length, 19.0 cm; breadth, 13.1 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 483</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Face of Nakaramba (son of #6; age about 14 years). Head length, 19.3 cm; breadth, 13.8 cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Archaeological Collection

In 1955 Evans updated the Director of the Department of Information on the location of the archaeological collection from the 1948 expedition. He stated that, “the stone and bone implements collected by excavation and otherwise are in this Museum [Australian Museum], but [a] portion of this material has been selected as a representative series to be sent to the United States National Museum” (Evans to Director of the Department of Information 11.2.55: 1). The archaeological material was, in fact, delivered directly to the Australian Museum in 1948 and early 1949 (Hipsley to Hale 28.6.54: 1). The only division that was necessary concerning the archaeological material was between the Smithsonian Institution and the Australian Museum. It was decided prior to the expedition that, “every specimen of which no duplicate had been obtained would be returned to Australia… All specimens of new species would also be returned, and a unique anthropological specimen would remain in Australia, only a cast being taken to the United States” (Setzler 21.12.48: 2).

In 1955, when the distribution of the other collections came into questions, the archaeological material was also discussed. Murphy wrote to the Director of the Australian Museum stating, ‘the archaeological material which is being held by your museum… should be split three ways between (a) your museum, (b) the Department of Anthropology at the Australian National University, Canberra, and (c) the United States National Museum” (Murphy to Evans 23.5.55: 1). As the material was already divided between two of the suggested parties, the third appears to have been ignored. The Australian National University, having played no role in the expedition, would have been an unusual choice for the location of the material. The archaeological material is today still held primarily in the Australian Museum with a representative sample also being found at the Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.
Appendix H
Physical Anthropological Collection

The following quotes refer to the collection and distribution of the physical anthropological specimens collected during AASEAL:

“McCarthy from the Aust. [Australian] Museum and I spent a very profitable 3 weeks at Milingimbi. We were able to trench 3 large shell mounds and obtained an interesting… of stone artifacts and a cremated burial” (Setzler 28.8.48: 1).

“So far as I am aware, the position at present is as follows… Skeletal: The collection of Aboriginal Australian and Indonesian skulls and skeletons is at the United States National Museum, but no decision appears to have been made about its division or disposal” (McCarthy 9.2.55: 1).

“On August 16, 1954, I received a confidential letter, which must not be quoted, from the Head Curator of Anthropology at the United States National Museum, which quoting the following statement from a letter written by Mountford to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, on April 23, 1951: “There is a move to establish a Museum at our National capitol, and I am making a now official inquiry as to whether it would be possible for you to store in Washington the biological specimens belonging to Australia until we are ready to put them in the museum at Canberra, which may be in four or five years time. That would save a double transfer and a risk of damage to the specimens”. Setzler comments “that is why they are still here and evidently be - C.P.M. - never had any intention that these specimens were to go to your Museum”” (McCarthy 9.2.55: 1).

“Skeletal material: That Dr. Kellogg’s museum should retain one-third of this material and return the remaining two-thirds to me in Canberra for subsequent distribution as determined” (Murphy 23.5.55: 1).

The following notes are taken from the Introductory Catalogue Card for Catalogue Numbers 380,428-380,483, Physical Anthropology, Accession Number 178294, Arnhem Land Expedition, Washington D.C. Spelling and phrasing left the same as in the original record:
The specimens covered by this accession were collected by FM Setzler during 1948, and constitute the Smithsonian Institution’s share of the physical anthropological materials gathered by the Arnhem Land Expedition.

The skeletal material came from 8 sites:
1. Chasm Id. (off N coast of Groote Eylandt)
2. Winchelsea Id. (W of Chasm Island)
3. Bartalombo Bay (on N Coast of Groote Eylandt)
4. Port Bradshaw (in Gulf of Carpenteria, 25 miles S of Cape Arnhem)
5. Milingimbi Id. (in Crocodile Id. Group, E of Cape Stewart on N coast of Arnhem Land)
6. Gallery Hill (near Oenpelli mission, 50 miles inland on E Alligator River from Van Diemen Gulf)
7. Oenpelli Hill (near Oenpelli mission)
8. Red Lilly Lagoon (7 miles S of Oenpelli)

All of the disarticulated skeletal remains represent bone from caves and rock shelters. From 2 child bundles with paper bark and woven cloth wrappings still intact, it is assumed that the usual means of disposing of the dead had been to wrap them in paper bark, which in most cases had since disintegrated.

The 3 Malays (380, 429-431) and an Australian half-caste and a Malay (murdered in 1916; 380 447-448) were extended in graves along the beach. The painted skulls were collected at Milingimbi Id. had been brought to the mission by natives from Cape Stewart and the adjoining mainland.

Photographs of the skeletons insitu, and other pertinent expedition photographs are in Mr. Setzler’s files.

The following tables are taken from: Setzler, F, 1948, List of Specimens Collected by F.M. Setzler, Australia, 1948, in possession of the SAA, Setzler Files, Box 22: Folder 1, Arnhem Ethno Objects, Washington, D.C. The following notes accompanying the tables are taken from Setzler, F, 1948, Notes on the Human Skeletal Material Recovered in Arnhem Land, Northern Australia,
in 1948, by F.M. Setzler, in possession of the SAA, Setzler Files, Box 22: Folder 1, Arnhem Ethno Objects, Washington, D.C.

**Chasm Island**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Original Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380 428</td>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellaneous skull fragments representing at least 2 individuals (2 frontal; 1 male, 1 female; 1 left half frontal and left parietal; 1 right parietal; 1 posterior fragment of left parietal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Skull fragments from Chasm Island.** This island is one of a group of small islands just off the north coast of Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpenteria. Chasm Island is famous for its rock paintings, which were first recorded by the English explorer, Capt. Flinders, in 1802. These skull fragments were collected in one of the rock crevices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Original Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380 429</td>
<td>A-1</td>
<td>Skull, lower jaw, complete skeleton; male Malay age, about 50 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 430</td>
<td>B-1</td>
<td>Skull, lower jaw, complete skeleton; male Malay; age, about 40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 431</td>
<td>B-2</td>
<td>Skull, lower jaw, complete skeleton; male Malay; age, 50 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Winchelsea Island.** In June 1948, F.D. McCarthy, of the Australian Museum, Sydney, Australia, a member of the expedition, and myself excavated a Malay site on the south beach of Winchelsea Island. Winchelsea Island is directly west of Chasm Island, off the north coast of Groote Eylandt.

The three skeletons are considered Malay skeletons on the basis of our native informant, Banju [Banjo], and the tell-tale tamarind trees. Skeleton B-1 was found under an L-shaped formation of boulders at a depth of 36 inches from the surface. Directly beneath skeleton B-1 we found
skeleton B-2 at a depth of 38.5 inches below the surface, 2.5 inches under B-1. Skeleton A-1 was found beneath a hollow rectangular rock formation, adjoining B-1 and B-2. A-1 was found at a depth of 42 inches beneath the surface.

All three skeletons were buried extended in the flesh, on their right sides, with their heads to the north facing west. The arms of the skeleton B-2 were crossed and the hands bent back to fit into the pelvic area. The pits had been dug through three layers of soil strata in the sand, and consequently the bones were well preserved. Burial must have followed soon after death.

According to Jerry Blitner, a half-caste in the employ of Mr. Fred Gray on Groote Eylandt, the natives knew this Makassar or Malay site as Argburnamaja. Neither Malay nor Australian artefacts were found with the skeletons.

Photographs of skeletons insitu are in Setzler’s photographic files.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Original Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380 432</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no lower jaw); female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 433</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no face or lower jaw); female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 434</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no face or lower jaw); female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 435</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no face or lower jaw); female?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 436</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no face or lower jaw); female?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 437</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no face or lower jaw); male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 438</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandibles: 7; fragmentary maxillae: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 439</td>
<td></td>
<td>Femora: 15 right, 13 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 440</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tibiae: 5 right, 4 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 441</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humeri: 6 right, 3 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 442</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ulnae: 2 right, 2 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 443</td>
<td></td>
<td>Radii: 2 right, 1 left</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Miscellaneous Skeletons from Bartalombo Bay

These bones, completely disarticulated, were scattered over a narrow rock ledge, which extended 12 ft. north and south, and 25 ft. east and west. This ledge could only be reached through a narrow crevice with an opening on to Bartalombo Bay. The site is on a small peninsula on the north coast of Groote Eylandt. Presumably all of these burials had been wrapped in paper bark, which over the years disintegrated and the contents disturbed and scattered by rock wallabies and other rodents. Two child burials were more or less intact in their paper bark and woven cloth wrappings.

For details see photographs in Setzler’s file and archaeological notes.

### Port Bradshaw

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Original Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380 447</td>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Skull, lower jaw, skeleton; Australian half-caste, male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 448</td>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Skull, lower jaw, skeletal parts; Malay male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two skeletons from Port Bradshaw. Port Bradshaw is a bay along the east coast of Arnhem Land, approximately 25 miles south of Yirrkala and Cape Arnhem. Cape Arnhem is in the extreme northeast corner of Arnhem Land. These burials were found on a peninsula jutting into the bay of Port Bradshaw, on the southeast side of this bay.

Both burials were articulate except for the radius and ulna of one of the skeletons (#2), which were discovered 10 inches beneath the surface. The grave was dimly outlined in the sand by an
elliptical formation of stones measuring 8 ft. long and 4 ft. wide. Both skeletons were closely placed in the grave.

I had first assumed that skeleton #1 was an Australian aboriginal male and that skeleton #2 was a female. On the basis of one of our informants, William E. Harney, I was told that these bodies represented a half-caste (burial #1 and a Malay (Burial #2), who had been murdered in 1916. They had been in the employ of a Captain Luff, who had been doing trepanging out of Thursday Island. He had left these two individuals when he had returned to Thursday Island, and they were murdered by some of the natives from around Port Bradshaw.

The shoulder blade of skeleton #2 is pierced, which may be the result of the penetration of a dugong spear. A small fragment of a notched wooden spear point was found near the vertebrae of skeleton #1. No other artefacts were found with these skeletons.

For photographs of these bodies insitu see Setzler’s photographic file.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Original Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380 449</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no lower jaw); male; painted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 450</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no lower jaw); male; painted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 451</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no lower jaw); male; painted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Milingimbi Island. In August 1948, I visited Milingimbi Island, which is the first of the Crocodile Islands off the north coast of Arnhem Land. This is the site described by W. Lloyd Warner in his publication, “Black Civilisation.” Here we obtained four painted skulls, one with a mandible. The one with mandible is to be returned to the Australian Museum in Sydney. All of these skulls had been brought to the Methodist Mission Station on Milingimbi Island by natives from Cape Stewart. Cape Stewart is directly west of Milingimbi Island on the mainland of Arnhem Land. The presumably represent Australian aborigines whose skulls were painted by the aborigines from Cape Stewart.

For photographs see Setzler’s files.
**Gallery Hill, Oenpelli**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Original Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380 452</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no lower jaw); male; coarse European-type fabric attached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 453</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no lower jaw); male; frontal pathological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 454</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandibles of 3 adults and 1 child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 455</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skeletal parts, painted (including femora, tibiae, fibulae, scapulae, humeri, ulnae, radii and probably mandible from one individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 456</td>
<td></td>
<td>Femora: 5 right, 5 left (1 pathological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 457</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tibiae: 5 right, 5 left (1 infant and 1 pathological)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 458</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fibulae: 1 right, 2 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 459</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humeri: 3 right (1 pathological), 2 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 460</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ulnae: 3 right (1 pathological); 4 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 461</td>
<td></td>
<td>Radii: 3 right, 3 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 462</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scapulae: 1 right, 2 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 463</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skeletal parts: Pelvis (2 right, 2 left), sacrum, 4 ribs (1 pathological), clavicles (1 right, 1 left)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Oenpelli: Gallery Hill (”Einvaluk”).** The skeletal material from Gallery Hill was collected from narrow rock crevices where they had been placed by the natives. They were not recovered from any of the archaeological excavations made in the rock shelters on Gallery hill. The bones were disarticulated, they may have been originally placed in the crevices in the customary paper bark wrappings, all of which had disintegrated. Some of the bones had fallen out of the narrow crevices and were found on the ground.
Oenpelli Hill, Oenpelli

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Original Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380 464</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no lower jaw); female; painted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 465</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull (no lower jaw); male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 466</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull, lower jaw; female; fragmentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 467</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandibles: 2, adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 468</td>
<td></td>
<td>Femora: 3 right, 4 left (2 partial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 469</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tibiae: 3 right (1 partial), 2 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 470</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fibulae: 1 left, 1 right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 471</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humeri: 3 right, 4 right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 472</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ulnae: 2 right, 2 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 473</td>
<td></td>
<td>Radii: 2 right, 2 left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 474</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scapulae: 1 left; clavicle: 1 right; tali: 1 right, 3 left; sterni: 1 manubrium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oenpelli: Oenpelli Hill (“Argaluk”). The skeletons from Oenpelli Hill were found in a small rock crevice on the north side of cave site nos. 1 and 2, on the highest point of Oenpelli Hill. These skeletons were disarticulated and indicated the effect of weathering.

Specimens marked “Box S-6” are fragmentary bones recovered from cave site #1 on Oenpelli Hill. These consisted of very badly decomposed bundle burials on the floor of the cave. The fragmentary skeletons from Box S-9 were obtained as individual bones during the excavation of site #2 on Oenpelli Hill. These were the only bones recovered at Oenpelli during excavations.

Red Lilly Lagoon, Oenpelli

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>Original Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380 475</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skull, lower jaw; adult female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following notes are taken from:
“About four miles west of Amalipa is a circular bay called Bartalumba Basin, which is fringed with mangroves, except for its narrow opening. Behind the mangroves the shell heaps are considerably higher. While at this site our attention was directed to a burial cave.

The cave is located at the north-west entrance to Bartalumba Basin, well hidden by a large mass of consolidated sandstone subjected to a considerable amount of wave and wind erosion. Led by Gulpidja, one of our native informants, we climbed to the top of several large boulders and saw a narrow crevice. By pushing and pulling ourselves through this steep, narrow defile, we came to an opening overlooking the bay.

On a shelf of rock 12 ft. across (north to south) and sloping back about 50 ft. we saw many bleached and scattered human bones. These were concentrated in an area 12 by 25 ft. All of the bones, except those of infants, were disarticulated and scattered over the shelf. Two skulls had rolled from this level and were found resting on narrow ledges.

This cave served as the final repository for bundle burials wrapped in paper-bark. Over the years many of the bark bundles had disintegrated and rock wallabies and rodents had scattered the bones over the cave floor. Intact bundles containing infants indicated the type of bundle used for now disintegrated burials of adults. Our guide, Gulpidja, walked round the narrow ledge on the open side fronting the bay and pointed to a long wooden barbed spear-point near the lumbar vertebrae of one of the burials. Gulpidja had described how he planned to show us the cave containing the body of an aboriginal whom his grandfather had speared. He indicated the barbed spear-point as verification of his story.”

The following notes are taken from:

“From 2 to 7 June 1948, we, together with three native helpers, Gulpidja, Kumbiala, and Iningarukwa, camped on Winchelsea Island”
“On the south side of Winchelsea Island, near an opening in the island-encircling mangroves, is a large grove of tamarind trees growing on a sandy ridge seventy-five yards back from the beach. Beneath a dense tangle of undergrowth and practically encased in the roots of the trees we found three artificial boulder formations”.

“The best-preserved arrangement consisted of rectangular ring of coral heads 6 ft. 6 in. long and 5 ft. 5 in. wide. No 2, a similar formation, but L-shaped as though a portion of the stones had been removed, was 1 ft. 3 in. west of No 1. It was 6 ft. 4 in. in length and 3 ft 3 in. wide. No 3, a small pile of stones, measuring 3 ft. by 2ft 3 in. was 2ft. west of No 2”.

“In excavating the third formation we found twenty-five coral heads. Beneath these was a mass of roots and humus, then a 6 in. layer of clean, wind-blown sand. At a depth of 1 ft. 4 in. beneath the rocks we came upon the carapace of a small turtle. No significance could be attached to this carapace except its proximity to the rock formations. Even though we dug through the undisturbed sand beneath this find for several feet, no artefacts or burials were encountered”.

“Our next operation was the removal of the second rock formation. Beneath the rocks we found an 8 in. stratum of humus, a 6 in. layer of clean sand, 8in. of humus, a 5 in. layer of clean sand and 9 in. of humus and roots. At the base of this stratum, 3 ft. below the rock formation, we came upon the first human skeleton. From the size of the bones and the appearance of the skull of this well preserved and articulated skeleton it seemed certain that it was not an Australian aboriginal. The body had been buried soon after death in a full-length extended position lying on its right side, feet to the south and face turned to the west. The forearms were tightly flexed against the chest with the fingers under the chin. This skeleton is that of an elderly male of south-east Asian extraction, probably Macassan. Except for a circle of organic mould near the skull, which might represent the remnants of a pole or grave marker, no artefacts were associated with the body”.

“After removing the bones, we dug beneath the sand on which the skeleton rested and came upon another skeleton. The sutures on the skull of this individual were almost closed, and all teeth, except for two in the upper mandible which were well worn, were missing. The arms were crossed, hands bent back to fit in the pelvic area. This skeleton, like the first was buried full length on its right side, face turned to the west. It was 38.5 inches below the original ground surface and 2.5 inches beneath the first skeleton. The physical type appeared to be south-east
Asian or Macassan. Because of its juxtaposition to the first skeleton, one might assume that both were buried at about the same time and placed in the same pit”.

“Stone formation No 1 was next cleared. At a depth of 3ft. 6 in. we came upon the skull of another Asian (Macassan) skeleton. Here again we exposed the remains of an individual well past middle age with the skull sutures practically absorbed, with one tooth in the lower mandible and on in the upper. He, too, was lying on his right side with arms crossed over the pelvis and knees slightly flexed”.

“The stone formations 1 and 2 are examples of the peculiar type of burial construction placed over the graves of the three senile male skeletons. There was no indication as to the cause of death and unfortunately no artifacts or personal objects were placed with the bodies. The fact that all three were buried on their right sides, arms crossed, faced toward the west, may have some religious or cultural significance. Even thought these graves were dug through several humus layers, the absence of aboriginal artifacts and the lack of datable objects in the Macassan graves prevents us from suggesting the century or year when the Macassans used this site for obtaining trepang.”

The following notes are taken from:

“On 22 July 1948 we, together with several other members of the expedition, were taken to Port Bradshaw in the Kuru, a patrol vessel belonging to the Northern Territory Administration. On the following day Setzler visited an island in Port Bradshaw. At a small cover in the north-west corner of the island considerable evidence was found of trepang pits used by Macassan and, ore recently, by European fishermen. Five more or less rectangular-shaped pits and several less distinct pits were found just behind the line of the beach, where fires were built for cooking and tanning trepang. The pits ranged in size from 13ft. long and 8ft. wide and 3ft. deep to 22 by 11 by 3ft. Trenches dug through several of these pits, especially along the beach line, produced only the stones which had served as foundations for the trepang kettles. Along the beach, and scattered about an area washed by the tide, were numerous eroded potsherds, among which were pieces of glass and the seal from an old Dutch rum bottle. The Macassan pottery was more abundant in
front of these trepang pits than it was on Winchelsea Island. This section was exposed to hurricanes, the most recent in February 1948, which no doubt had washed out quantities of potsherds. No evidence of chipped projectile points or human skeletal material was discovered during the limited survey of the island.”

“On our return on board the Kuru a small grove of large tamarind trees was observed on a peninsula extending into Port Bradshaw from the mainland to the west. On 24 July a reconnaissance was made to determine the size of the Macassan trepang site. The customary granite rocks for boiler foundations were beneath the wide-spreading branches of the tamarind trees located on the north side of the peninsula about half a mile west of the point”.

“About a hundred yards back from the beach and several yards west of the tamarind trees was a rectangular formation of rocks slightly exposed in the yellow sand. This measured 8 by 4ft. In removing the eighteen boulders we came upon a disarticulated human radius and ulna about 1ft. beneath the surface. This seemed most unusual - if the rectangular rock formation had served as a boiler foundation. On removing dirt and sand to a depth of 2ft. 9in., we exposed the articulated skeletons of two individuals lying on their left sides and close together. Both were evidently buried at the same time. The left forearm of the larger skeleton was missing, which accounted for the disarticulated radius and ulna we had found just beneath the boulders”.

“After the skeletons had been cleaned and the bones removed from the pit, it was noticed that the right shoulder-blade or scapula of the smaller skeleton had a hole in the lower portion. Lying on the upper vertebrae of the larger skeleton was a small fragment of a rotten piece of wood with a small notch at one end. This type of burial seemed contrary to what might be expected from aboriginal customs. This method of burial in full length was quite unusual; natives might have been buried by the Macassan’s or Europeans, but some time must have elapsed after death before they were buried, as indicated by the disarticulate position of the left forearm of the larger skeleton. No artifacts other than the small piece of wood, which may have been the remnant of a spear, were found in the burial pit”.

“Some weeks later, 23 August 1948, this puzzling burial was discussed with William E. Harney, who joined the expedition at Yirrkala, and he related the following incident which seems to throw considerable light on the problem”
“In 1916 Captain Luff from Thursday Island, with five trepang or lugger boats, had a camp along the shores of Port Bradshaw. During one of his return trips to Thursday Island he left a half-caste from the latter island and a Malay in charge of his trepang camp on this peninsula. They were assisted by three native families from Borroloola. One day in April the half-caste was sitting on a log near the beach while the Malay was swimming near by. Two natives from the Port Bradshaw region sat on either side of the half-caste. At a prearranged signal another Port Bradshaw native came from behind and threw a spear into the back of the half-caste. Seeing the commotion the Malay started swimming towards a small cutter, but the Port Bradshaw natives harpooned him as they would a dugong or turtle. The Borroloola natives were able to escape in a small cutter to Borroloola, where they reported the murder to the police. A month later the police came to Port Bradshaw, discovered the bodies and buried them along the beach.”

“Two groups of disarticulated human skeletons were recovered. However, the bones were so badly preserved that no condyles remained for identification of age or sex.”

“This was the largest, deepest, and most difficult shelter we excavated on Unbalanja. Just within the overhanging entrance were three attractive X-ray paintings of large kangaroos as well as other animals too faded to identify”.

“After removing the piled up deposit against the back wall, we found a narrow crevice 6 ft. 6 in. long and 3ft. 3in. wide. In a small cavity we uncovered six bundles of children’s and adult bones wrapped in paper bark envelopes. The human bones we recovered on Unbalanja were usually found in narrow crevices, ledges and small caves on the face of vertical cliffs. It is likely that the
bones recovered here in site 6 had been placed in the crevices many years ago and subsequently had become covered with the dirt and ashes.”

**The following notes are by the author regarding the distribution of the AASEAL physical anthropological collection:**

The skeletal material collected during the 1948 expedition was delivered to the Australian Museum and, from there, forwarded directly to the Smithsonian Institution. This material was allocated to the Smithsonian because research was to be undertaken. Following this research, the skeletal material was to be returned to the Australian Museum. No research was ever undertaken and no return was ever made (Hipsley to Hale 28.6.54: 1).

On August 16, 1954, I received a confidential letter, which must not be quoted, from the Head Curator of Anthropology at the United States National Museum, which quotes the following statement from a letter written by Mountford to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, on April 23, 1951: “There is a move to establish a Museum at our National capital, and I am making a now official inquiry as to whether it would be possible for you to store in Washington the biological specimens belonging to Australia until we are ready to put them in the museum at Canberra, which may be in four or five years time. That would save a double transfer and a risk of damage to the specimens”. Setzler comments “that is why they are still here and evidently - C.P.M. - never had any intention that these specimens were to go to your Museum” (McCarthy to Evans 9.2.55: 1).

On 23.4.51, Mountford wrote to Wetmore, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, suggesting the skeletal material from the Arnhem Land Expedition is kept at his institution, “until we are ready to put them in the Museum in Canberra” (Mountford to Wetmore 23.4.51: 45). Mountford’s estimate was that a new museum would be built in four to five years time and that it was unnecessary to transport the material twice. Wetmore agreed to his suggestion stating the Smithsonian Institution would hold the material, “until your authorities are ready to receive them” (Wetmore to Mountford 1951: 59).
In 1955, when assessments were being made on the other collections of material from the 1948 expedition, the skeletal material again came into question. Apparently forgetting his correspondence with Wetmore, or realising that no National Museum was to be built in the near future, Mountford met with Murphy and Evans to decide upon the distribution. In reference to the skeletal material it was stated that, “these are at present at the Smithsonian Institute, which is being asked to return two-thirds to Canberra to be kept here [Australian Institute of Anatomy]” (Minutes 24.3.55: 2). If this request was officially made, it was not undertaken. Considering all of the other suggestions regarding the collections were followed-up after the meeting, it would seem unusual that this one alone was ignored. Perhaps remembering that the skeletal material was initially to be returned to the Australian Museum, Murphy wrote to Evans (the Director of the Australian Museum) two months after the meeting stating, “that Dr. Kellogg’s museum should retain one-third of this material and return the remaining two-thirds to me in Canberra for subsequent distribution as determined” (Murphy to Evans 23.5.55: 1).

Today most of the skeletal material acquired during the American-Australian Scientific Expedition of 1948 is held at the Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. The only other skeletal material from the 1948 expedition located during this research was one painted skull held by the Art Gallery of South Australia. Mountford sold this skull for one pound to the Gallery in May 1961. It is unknown where Mountford kept the skull (the official property of the Commonwealth Government) from 1948 until 1961. It would appear as though the Australian Government, the National Museum of Australia or the Australian Museum have forgotten to ask for the skeletal material or at least two-thirds of the material back from the United States.

The only skeletal material not located for this study was a cremated burial that was excavated. “McCarthy from the Aust. Museum and I spent a very profitable 3 weeks at Milingimbi. We were able to trench 3 large shell mounds and obtained an interesting… of stone artifacts and a cremated burial” (Setzler to Wetmore 28.8.48: 1). If the remnants of this burial was collected, its whereabouts are today unknown.

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1 This skull is catalogued as A660 with an older catalogue number of 712PA11. It was acquired from Yirrkala and is in the Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land vol. 1 page 316. The skull is recorded as being a jiritja woman’s of the honeybee totem of the dalwongu mata of Blue Mud Bay (Mountford 1956: 317).
## Appendix I

The Transfer of Ethnographic Artefacts from SAM to AIA


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Artefact</th>
<th>Number of Artefact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bark Paintings</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Paintings</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spears (or spear shafts, heads)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spear Throwers</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm Bands</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woven Baskets</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonial Posts</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorated Paddles</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carved Figures</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorated Sticks</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Wooden Objects</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Bags</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonial Boards</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonial Ornaments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Ornaments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco Pipes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bark Baskets</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone Knives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gum Cement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Boats</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder Bands</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woven Bags (filled with fibre)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bark amulets</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bark Bundles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone Containers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bows</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conch Trumpets</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorated Drum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorated Shells</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorated Tablets</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didgeridoos</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Leaf Baskets</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuttle</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wire Pins (set in wax)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J

Outline of the Distribution of AASEAL Ethnographic Artefacts

Art Gallery of New South Wales
The Art Gallery of New South Wales holds 8 bark paintings and 16 paintings on paper from the Arnhem Land Expedition. These were a gift from the Australian Government in 1956.

Art Gallery of South Australia
The Art Gallery of South Australia holds 62 ethnographic artefacts and 1 physical anthropological specimen (a painted skull) from the Arnhem Land Expedition.

Art Gallery of Western Australia
The Art Gallery of Western Australia holds 4 bark paintings and 5 paintings on paper from the Arnhem Land Expedition. These were a gift from Mountford in 1956.

Australian Museum
The Australian Museum holds 1065 ethnographic, 935 archaeological, 31 physical anthropological and 2 unidentified artefacts from the Arnhem Land Expedition.

The Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution
The Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, holds 409 ethnographic, 219 archaeological and 209 physical anthropological specimens from the Arnhem Land Expedition.

National Gallery of Victoria
The National Gallery of Victoria holds 16 bark paintings and 7 paintings on paper from the Arnhem Land Expedition.

National Museum of Australia
The National Museum of Australia holds 250 ethnographic artefacts from the Arnhem Land Expedition.

Queensland Art Gallery
The Queensland Art Gallery holds 14 bark paintings and 9 paintings on paper from the Arnhem Land Expedition. These were a gift from the Australian Government in 1956.
South Australian Museum

The South Australian Museum holds 268 ethnographic artefacts collected by Mountford during the Arnhem Land Expedition.

These numbers are certain to be distorted due to the fact that the Mountford Collections at the South Australian Museum have been mixed together because Mountford did not catalogue the individual collections. This means that it is difficult to say for certain that one artefact was collected on a particular expedition. For example, Mountford collected bark paintings for the museum at Oenpelli in 1949, Yirrkala in 1952 and Melville Island in 1954. The artefacts included here are only those mentioned in the Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land (Mountford 1956, 1960).

By comparing this published record with records from the museum it is possible to gain an understanding of which paintings were from the 1948 expedition. This, however, assumes all of the material mentioned in the Records of the Expedition was in fact collected on the expedition and not at a later date. The other ethnological material listed above is recorded by the museum as being collected by Mountford from Groote Eylandt, Yirrkala, Milingimbi Island and Oenpelli between 1948 and 1954. Included are objects from the American-Australian Scientific Expedition.

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery holds 17 bark paintings from the Arnhem Land Expedition, which were presented as a gift from the Australian Government in 1956. The Gallery was pledged 12 bark paintings and 12 paper paintings and it is not known why they today hold only 17 works.
Appendix K

Other Collectors of Ethnographic Artefacts

There are a percentage of artefacts that cannot be allocated to any one researcher. These include 88 artefacts, which could have been collected by either Mountford or by McCarthy (see Figure 1). The largest collection of a type of artefact is bark paintings from Groote Eylandt, which represent 29.6% of this questionable material (see Figure 2). This has, no doubt, influenced some of the findings from this analysis particularly, those referring to the two collectors choices of artefacts and their collections from Groote Eylandt.

![Figure 1: Type and number of ethnographic artefacts collected by Mountford or McCarthy during AASEAL](image1)

![Figure 2: Provenance of ethnographic artefacts collected by Mountford or McCarthy during AASEAL](image2)
Reverend Ellemor for Mountford collected another 71 artefacts from Milingimbi Island (see Figure 1). The majority of this material is spears, which were also collected in large numbers from Groote Eylandt by Mountford (see Figure 2). It is clear that Mountford requested particular artefacts from Reverend Ellemor, however, this is primarily in reference to bark paintings (see Chapters Five and Eight). It would seem unlikely, considering Mountford’s specific requests for artefacts at other locations that he would pay for materials to come from Milingimbi Island, which he had not requested.

Finally, 1.1% of all ethnographic artefacts associated records do not state their collector and this cannot be determined from the place of collection (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Type and number of AASEAL ethnographic artefacts with an unknown collector
Appendix L

Type, Number and Provenance of Bark Paintings held in Museums and Art Galleries

Art Gallery of New South Wales
The majority of bark paintings held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales were collected from Groote Eylandt (see Figure 1). The only other location from which a painting originated was Oenpelli.

![Graph showing provenance of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales](image1)

Figure 1: Provenance of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales

Art Gallery of South Australia
The Art Gallery of South Australia holds bark paintings mainly collected from Groote Eylandt (see Figure 2). Their collection also incorporates 12 paintings from Oenpelli and 11 from Yirrkala.

![Graph showing provenance of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the Art Gallery of South Australia](image2)

Figure 2: Provenance of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the Art Gallery of South Australia
Art Gallery of Western Australia

It is not known where the 4 bark paintings held in the Art Gallery of Western Australia were collected.

Australian Museum

The bark paintings from AASEAL held in the Australian Museum were collected from 5 locations (see Figure 3). The largest number originated from the second base camp, Yirrkala, followed by Groote Eylandt, Oenpelli and Milingimbi Island. All of the bark paintings documented as having been collected from the Liverpool River Region during AASEAL are held in the Australian Museum. It could, therefore, be suggested that errors in the record keeping at this museum are to blame for the inaccuracy of the details surrounding these bark paintings which were probably acquired at Oenpelli (see Chapters Five and Seven).

![Provenance of Bark Paintings from AASEAL held in the Australian Museum](image)

Figure 3: Provenance of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the Australian Museum

National Gallery of Victoria

The bark paintings held in the National Gallery of Victoria were collected mainly from Groote Eylandt followed by Oenpelli, Milingimbi Island and Yirrkala (see Figure 4).
National Museum of Australia
The largest number of bark paintings held by the National Museum of Australia was collected from Groote Eylandt followed by Oenpelli and Yirrkala (see Figure 5). Fifteen bark paintings from Milingimbi Island are also held by this museum and represent the largest collection of its type from AASEAL.

Queensland Art Gallery
The Queensland Art Gallery holds barks paintings that were primarily collected at Groote Eylandt. One painting was also collected from Yirrkala and Milingimbi Island (see Figure 6).
Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian Institution holds similar numbers of bark paintings from two of the base camps: Oenpelli, Yirrkala (see Figure 7). Slightly less were collected from Groote Eylandt.

South Australian Museum

The largest number of bark paintings in the South Australian Museum was collected from the final base camp, Oenpelli, followed by Yirrkala. Groote Eylandt represents a significantly lower number than the other two base camps (see Figure 8). Some paintings were collected from Milingimbi Island and a small number have no recorded place of collection.
Figure 8: Provenance of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the South Australian Museum

**Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery**

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery holds bark paintings that were collected mainly from Groote Eylandt followed by Yirrkala and Bremer Island (see Chapter Seven). This institution also has 6 bark paintings with no provenance (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Provenance of bark paintings from AASEAL held in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery