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Volume 12

**‘Wild Australia’:  
performers, productions and politics**

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**A Queensland Government Project**

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# Photographic Identification of the Troupe Members of the Wild Australia Show

Michael AIRD and Paul MEMMOTT

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The ‘Wild Australia Show’ was a travelling troupe of Aboriginal performers who, during 1892–93, performed in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne where they were photographed by leading studio portraitists of the time. The vast majority of the over 160 collected photos of the troupe are very poorly provenanced, with the performers’ names and language group identities often inaccurately spelt partly due to being initially mis-heard and mis-pronounced; and in a proportion of cases photos are non-provenanced. This paper contains an introduction to the photographs, names and group identities of the 27 Aboriginal participants who were drawn from the Queensland frontiers, with a description of the methodology of how their identities were derived from a complex, contradictory, but ethnographically limited corpus of data. This research in visual anthropology represents a contribution to correcting the often ethnocentric and racist legacy of colonial Indigenous museum collections – the failure to recognise and acknowledge basic human identity and familial and social affiliations amongst First Nations peoples.

□ Visual anthropology, Australian Aboriginal portraits, Wild Australia Show, Archibald Meston, Kudajarnd, Gida, Yamurra

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Archibald Meston's Wild Australia Show of 1892–93 was briefly introduced by Maria Nugent in her opening paper in this journal. Meston, with the help of his hired manager, Brabazon Purcell, assembled a pan-tribal troupe of 27 Aboriginal people to execute a traveling performance around the world, culminating at The World Exhibition at Chicago in late 1893. Performances were first planned in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne after which they would depart by steamer overseas. However they were destined to not leave Australia's shores as Meston's financial circumstances deteriorated and he abandoned the troupe in Melbourne (McKay and Memmott 2016). There are many intriguing accounts and dimensions to this saga which extended over three years and which inform of both Australian frontier and metropolitan engagements and transactions between the colonisers and the First Nations, some of which are analysed in this journal, but most of which will need to be examined in future publications (e.g. in a forthcoming monograph by Memmott et al., in prep). However in this contribution, we simply ask who were the members of Meston's Wild Australia Troupe who toured in 1892 and 1893. In this paper we have aimed to present an introduction to the photographs, names and group identities of the 27 Aboriginal participants drawn from the Queensland frontiers and we describe the methodology of how we derived such from a complex but ethnographically limited corpus of data.

Earlier in our careers we had separately encountered and commenced assembling a confusing and at times contradictory collection of photographs in which the precise number and names of these people was elusive. Memmott engaged with the photographic data as early as the 1980s whilst searching for historical evidence to support the Wakaya Land Claim in the Northern Territory and finding that a number of troupe members were Wakaya. By combining our data and knowledge and enlisting further linguistic assistance, we achieved this initial identification of each troupe member in late 2015 and give an account of our analytic process at the time herein. Since then we have assembled a

larger research team who have investigated, in much greater depth, the biographical backgrounds of the troupe; an example of such a profile is provided in the accompanying piece on Gida (Memmott et al., this volume) and other biographies will follow<sup>1</sup> on particular outstanding leaders in the troupe and their respective agencies in making the tour a success from the performers' assessment. This piece however provides a portrait analysis and name and group identity for each troupe participant by way of initial introduction; the start of a process of 'humanising' the colonial photographic record.

### **THE PHOTOGRAPHERS: THE PUZZLE OF THE MANY PHOTOGRAPHS**

(by Michael Aird)

The majority of the images of the Wild Australia performers were taken by Charles Kerry, Henry King and John William Lindt, three of the most prominent Australian photographers of the time. Many of these images have been secured by institutions around the world and fortunately in most cases the name of the photographer is easily identified. I first started to come across images of these performers in about 1990 while researching for a photographic exhibition. Although back then I was not aware that these images were of a performing troupe named Wild Australia. I also did not know at that time that Archibald Meston was connected to this story. So when I first started finding these photographs in various collections, I did not have an understanding of the context in which these photographs had been taken.

As part of my professional research methodology, it became necessary to develop a general knowledge of professional photographers of the nineteenth century: where and when they worked, and for whom, the type and limits of their camera technologies, their styles of portraiture, retail modes, and even the furnishings and props in their studios to verify image recognition. Also, understandings the photographic technology of the time that enabled photographers to work away from their studios and document human subjects in outdoor settings.

At first, I had no particular interest in these images, but I would simply make copies as part of my ongoing research of any photographs of Queensland Aboriginal people that I came across. Initially I could not make sense of how these Queensland Aboriginal people were photographed by Kerry and King, who were based in Sydney, as I was unaware of those photographers visiting Queensland.

The various images that I was slowly accumulating contained photographs of both portraits in studios and in bush and beach settings. Finding images attributed to both Kerry and King, I surmised that a group of Queensland Aborigines must have been in Sydney at some point in time. By close observation of the unique body scars and cicatrix on the performers' torsos and arms I started to correlate the studio portrait images and outdoor setting images to identify the recurring images

of particular individuals. I had been at first struck by the powerful theatrical images by Kerry. The images of the troupe on the beach intrigued me the most. If these were Queensland Aboriginal performers, where was this beach? In Queensland? Growing up on the Gold Coast I was a surfer and had visited most surfing beaches throughout Queensland and northern New South Wales, but I could not recognise the shape of this rocky headland! Even when I was able connect the images to the Bondi Aquarium, it took further research to find out that the Bondi Aquarium was not at Bondi Beach but at nearby Tamarama Beach<sup>2</sup> (figure 1). And so my mind was intrigued by the many recurring images of individuals that seemed to be taken using different styles suggesting different photographers and venues in a number of States. How could this be explained?

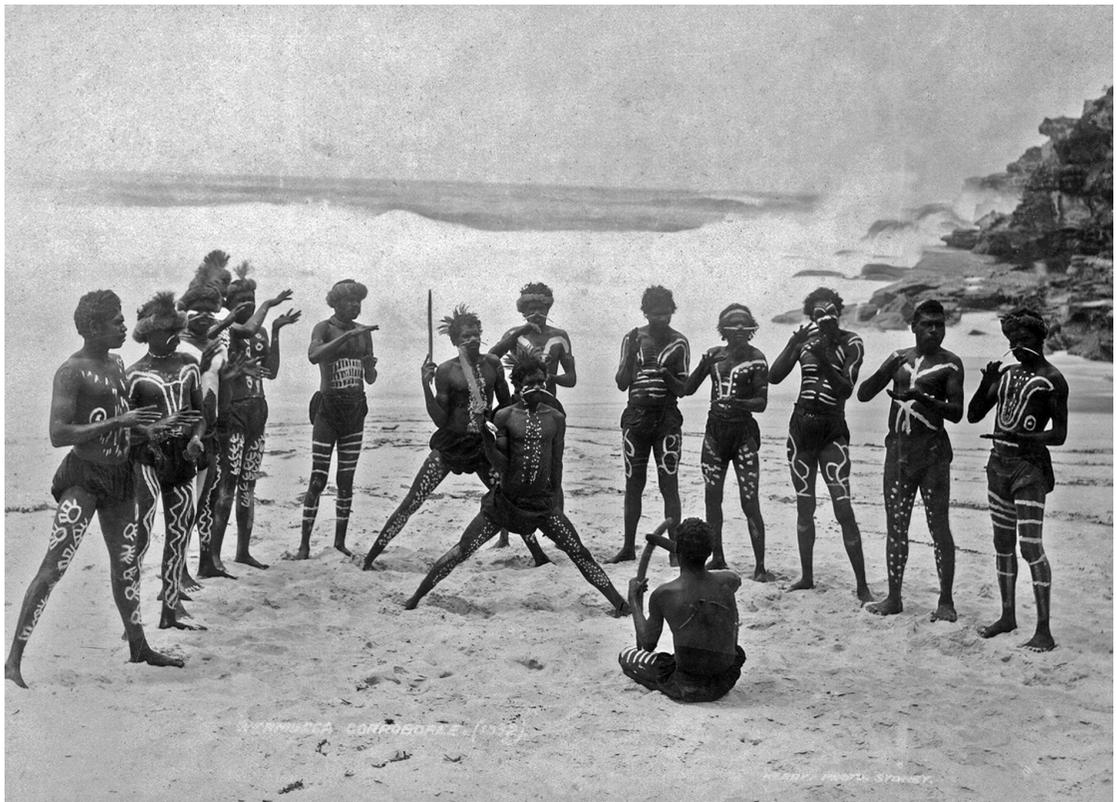


FIG. 1. Tamarama Beach, December 1892. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy Macleay Museum HP88.14.15.

When I first came across the 1936 magazine titled *Blackfellows of Australia*<sup>3</sup> in a friend's house in the mid-1990s, with the cover depicting two of the troupe members<sup>4</sup>, I questioned the image credit, as it named J.W.Lindt as the photographer (figure 2). I recognized the performer known as Kudajarnd<sup>5</sup> from the Kerry and King images and thought that maybe the photograph had not been taken by Lindt? At that time I had assumed that these individuals had visited Sydney but I had no knowledge of them visiting Melbourne, where Lindt was based. Then over time the story emerged of the performing group known as Wild Australia and it was this group that visited Sydney and Melbourne and I could confirm that it was not the photographers who visited Queensland.

In 2014, I met with Paul Memmott with the aim of discussing our shared interest in the Wild Australia performers. It emerged that Memmott had uncovered a considerable body of research relating to the performers and I had secured copies of many more

images of the group than what he was aware of. There followed a spontaneous creative brainstorming discussion on topics of mutual interest that our paths of study on the Wild Australia Show crossed and coalesced into a powerful historical understanding; his archival research on the historical places, events and players, and my compilation of over 100 apparently linked photographs suddenly gelled together. We immediately resolved our converging interests into an ongoing commitment to undertake a team approach. We were of the shared view that we could bring about a new understanding for the public about this seemingly important historical event.

We then met with Diana Young, Director of the University of Queensland Anthropology Museum and a date was set early the following year for the Wild Australia exhibition to be launched. Memmott had some concerns about committing to producing an exhibition prior to a formal research strategy being implemented. But none the less we went ahead with co-curator Mandana Mapar, essentially developing an exhibition that reflected our research up until that point in time. With the help of such visually strong images and a series of very informative press articles of the time and an extensive body of archival research compiled by Memmott, we were able to present an exhibition that successfully portrayed this very important story. The next step was to develop a strategy to take our research further and this was initiated by partnering with several institutions and successfully securing Australian Research Council funding.

An interesting element of the Wild Australia story is that between the months of October and December 1892 the troupe spent time at St Lucia, the present day location of the University of Queensland, where Memmott and I are based. I am aware of eight photographs that were taken while the group were in Brisbane. Unfortunately none of the images of the troupe in Brisbane have the names of photographers' attached. Four of these photographs<sup>6</sup> have been identified in a bush setting, that may well be at St Lucia (figure 3). In one image a scene has been created where the performers are pretending to sneak up on the camp where Brabazon Purcell and Harold Meston are seated at the entrance to a tent (figure 4). These

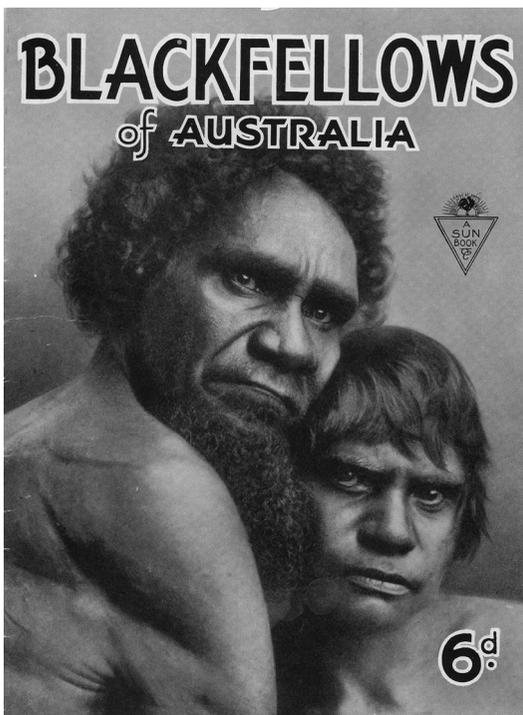


FIG. 2 Kudajarnd and Langinkab photograph by J.W. Lindt, Melbourne, 1893. Reproduced on a popular 1936 publication. Courtesy private collection.

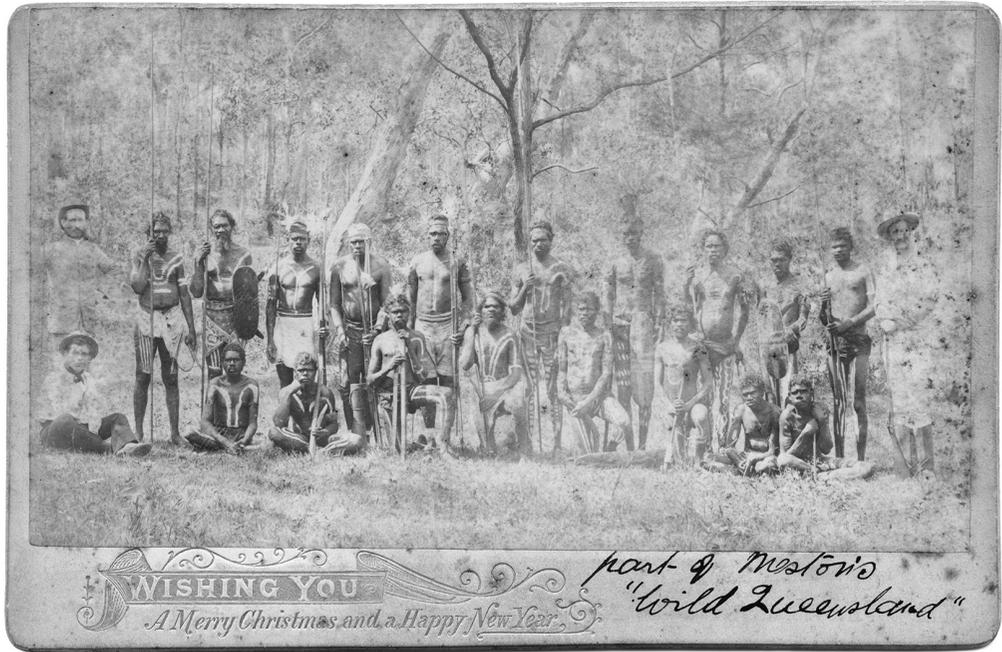


FIG. 3. Archibald Meston, Harold Meston and Brabazon Purcell with the performers during their rehearsal period in November 1892, probably at St Lucia. Photo possibly by Will Stark. Brisbane 1892. Courtesy Macleay Museum H83.3.14.

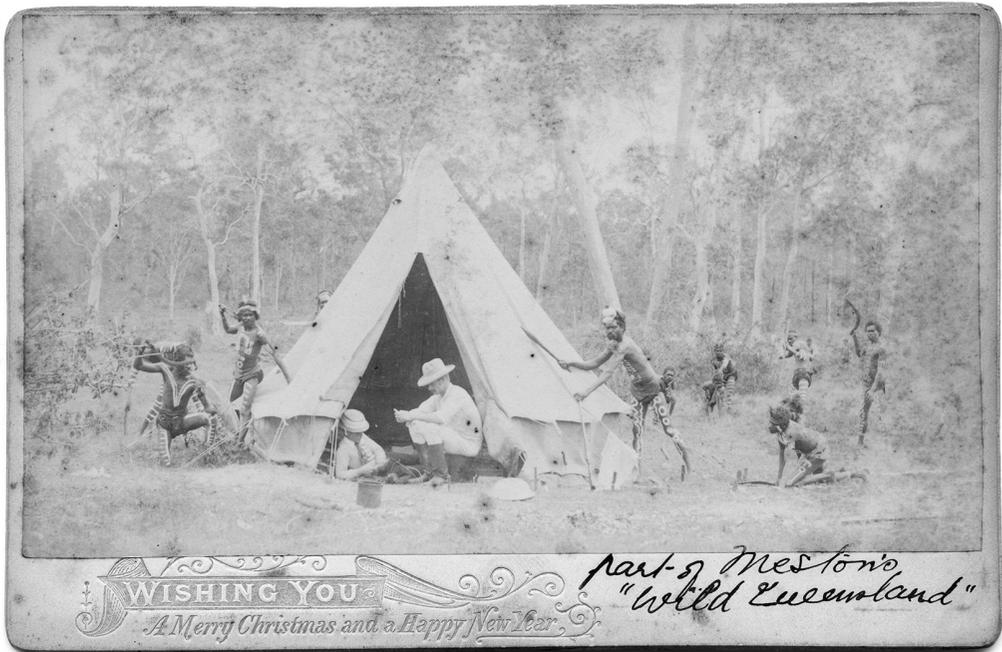


FIG. 4. Harold Meston and Brabazon Purcell with performers during their rehearsal period in November 1892, probably at St Lucia. Photo possibly by Will Stark. Brisbane, 1892. Courtesy Macleay Museum. HP83.3.13.

images have been mounted on cards with the greeting “Wishing You – a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year”. My research has identified that the possible photographer of these images may be Will Stark, Poul Poulson or Albert Lomar, as they each distributed images in the early 1890s mounted on cards with this greeting. Stark worked throughout the broader Brisbane region in the 1890s. He traded with the slogan *The Wandering Photographer* and also worked for the Brisbane photographer, Poul Poulson who was better known for studio photographs. Being familiar with the way Will Stark operated and his style of taking photographs, in my opinion he may well be the most likely photographer to have taken these images.

Two images of the troupe were taken on the 12 November 1892, when they boarded the paddle-steamer the *Natone* to join the Queensland Press Club picnic, and they were photographed during a performance they did when the boat stopped on the Chelmer Reach of the Brisbane River<sup>7</sup> (figure 5). A photo of the three troupe members from the

Northern Territory appears in an unreferenced press article and another image of the performers can be found in the Roberts Family collection held by the Queensland Museum<sup>8</sup>, which would place this image as being taken by Bert Roberts, an Ipswich-based amateur photographer.

One of the main aims of our ARC research project was to bring together as many images as possible of the Wild Australia troupe. After extensive research I have managed to locate 115 individual portraits of the performers taken by Kerry, King and Lindt. Another 34 photographs by Kerry, King and Lindt have been identified of the performers in various groupings. There are also eight photographs taken of the troupe members while they were in Brisbane.

Another main aim of the research project has been to find images of the performers taken either before they joined the troupe or after they returned to their homes. This has proved a very difficult task. In 1888 A.C. Haddon photographed Gida and his family on Prince of Wales Island in the



FIG. 5. Queensland Press Club picnic. Chelmer Reach, Brisbane River, 12 November 1892. Photo possibly by Will Stark, Brisbane, 1892. Courtesy Michael Graham-Stewart.

Torres Strait.<sup>9</sup> Gida was also among a large group photographed in 1898 at a community meeting on Badu Island.<sup>10</sup> Then in 1899, not long before his death, Gida was photographed on Thursday Island with John Douglas the Government Resident. Gida is seen holding his 'much prized fox-terrier'.<sup>11</sup>

Over the eight or so months that the Wild Australia troupe performed, their journey was well documented by a series of press articles and by notable photographers. When they arrived in Sydney in December 1892 they were photographed by Kerry. While in Melbourne they were photographed by Lindt. Then on their return from Melbourne to Sydney in late May 1893,<sup>12</sup> King took a number of outdoor images and studio portraits. The photographs by Kerry and King show many similarities; both used plain studio backdrops and photographed subjects mostly from the waist up. Kerry had many of the performers decorate themselves in body paint and traditional ornaments, while King preferred them unadorned. The portraits taken by Lindt are also very similar in style to those taken by Kerry and King, but there are some minor differences in composition and Lindt seemed to focus more on the facial expressions of the sitters. Then in July 1893 the performers boarded a boat in Brisbane to be returned to their traditional country and they mostly then seem to have disappeared from the history books.

I have been fortunate to be able to locate over 160 different photographs of the Wild Australia performers. The question could be asked, 'why did they pose for these photographs'? But the more important question is 'why did they agree to leave their homes to travel as professional performers'? Once on tour, it would have become a regular occurrence to pose for photographs and part of the job as members of a performing troupe. Their legacy is that these images form an important historical document. As research continues we will hopefully find more images and details of the lives the troupe members lived while on tour as professional performers and after their return to their traditional countries.

## ORIGINS OF OUR RESEARCH ON THE WILD AUSTRALIA SHOW

(by Paul Memmott)

In 1980, at the instruction of the Central Land Council in Alice Springs, I went in search of the 'lost Wakaya tribe' in Central Australia. This assignment was to catalyse my continuing research on the Wild Australia Show for the next 40 years as some of the troupe members proved to be Wakaya people. I was one of the first full-time consultant anthropologists in Australia (along with Peter Sutton) and was employed by the Central Land Council to research the Wakaya/Alyawarr land claim in the central east of the Northern Territory. This task alone was to consume ten years of my career (e.g. see Memmott et al. 1988). There were known to be numerous Alyawarr claimants in Tennant Creek who, along with local Warumungu elders, had informed the Land Council that the Wakaya had all gone in the 'revolver time' but it was believed some descendants were still alive and living in Queensland. This was my vague brief. I was considered someone with experience on the Queensland/Northern Territory borderline area and was thus given an unequipped 4WD vehicle and sent forth to look for Wakaya descendants.

The only readily identifiable clue in the anthropological literature was the writing of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen who had travelled up the Overland Telegraph line on horseback in 1901 and encountered a large ceremonial camp at Jurnkurrakara near the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station (e.g. Spencer and Gillen 1904, 1968). They remained for several weeks to record numerous daily ceremonies as different language groups arrived from different directions. All were presided over by an eminent Wakaya elder (Ilyambanda<sup>13</sup>) who was simultaneously conducting a training school for Warumungu doctors. They also collected a ceremonial item from this clever man, a Menadji (Yam) Dreaming sacred object which is still held in the Museum Victoria collection.

In 1980, the only other literature item on the Wakaya which was readily available was the transcript of an alleged ethnographic presentation but which read

more like a piece of sensationalist journalism: a paper read to the Victorian Royal Geographic Society in 1893 by one Brabazon Harry Purcell (1894). Who was this man Purcell and how did he know about the Wakaya as well as other western Queensland Aboriginal peoples? I was to later learn that he had been the manager of the Wild Australia Show and that his information was partly obtained from the troupe members and partly embellished for showmanship but also embedded with much ethnocentric bias. It was in fact Purcell who was sent on his own to the frontiers of Queensland by Meston to locate, recruit and transport suitable

members for the troupe. A major research task was reconstructing his route and the timing of his travels on horseback and by wagon, coach and steamship (figure 6).

The third significant finding about the *Wakaya* from my library searches on the east coast was to occur in 1981 in the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. Perchance I was perusing the contents of an historical photographic album labelled 'New South Wales Aboriginals'. A series of about six photos appeared attributed to the famous early Sydney photographer Charles Kerry and captioned with words including 'Workii tribe' and 'Workii Warrior'. As I looked at the body dress and paint-up I was convinced these portraits were of Central Australian Wakaya Aboriginal people, and not from New South Wales. It seems that as they had been photographed in Kerry's Studio in Sydney, and they were later assumed by museum curatorial staff to have been New South Wales people and classified as such.<sup>14</sup>

When I wrote the first draft of the Land Claim Book for submission to the Federal Court (c.1985), I included a brief account of the Wild Australia Show as part of the evidence. Although I was able to find many Wakaya people in Queensland whose ancestors had been historically caught there under the controls of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*, I was not able at the time to make any genealogical connections between the land claim's claimants and the Wakaya members of the troupe. Nevertheless, I commenced writing a long manuscript on the Wild Australia Show continuing to collate materials from the Queensland State Archives about the controversial manner in which Purcell conscripted the Wakaya on the Queensland border in 1892. (He was accused of taking them in chains by a pastoralist and an alcoholic Justice of the Peace in Boulia but vehemently denied this.)

From the time of my first search for the Wakaya, it was to be almost 35 years before my chance meeting with Michael Aird and after sharing of information, a revitalized path of discovery to uncover the secrets of the Wild Australia Show.

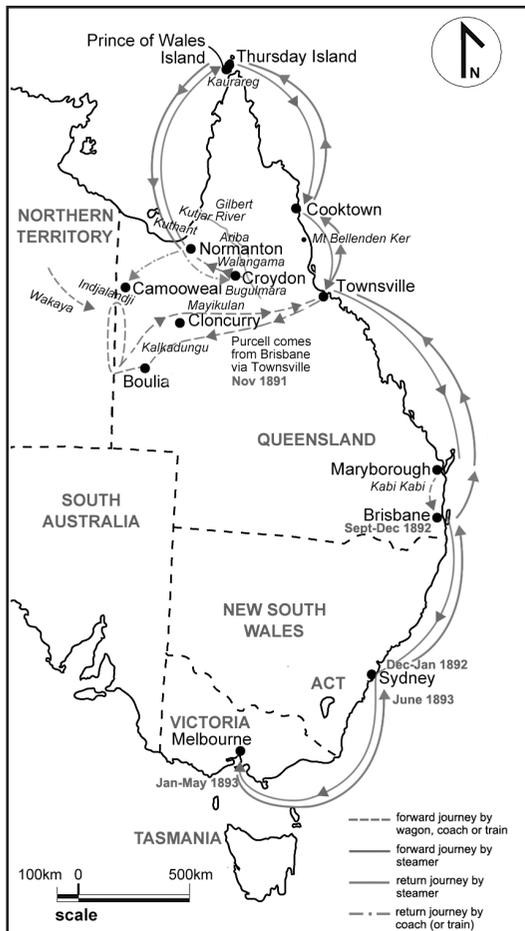


FIG. 6. Travel route of the 'Wild Australia Show' troupe during 1892-93, including the tribal territories of origin of the troupe members. Map © by Aboriginal Environments Research Centre, University of Queensland.

## IDENTIFYING THE TROUPE AND THEIR ORIGINS

(by both authors)

The travel route on the map that we produced for the Anthropology Museum exhibition (Aird et al. 2015) and the names of the troupe and their tribal groups were thus the result of a difficult and intensive research process over 25 years. As in most historical research projects, we were presented with limited and often contradictory information. The travel routes were the best we could construct at the time from press articles and official government correspondence, but again there were contradictions and a need for ongoing study.<sup>15</sup>

Some 160 identified photographs of the troupe are held in collections around the world and have been reproduced in many outlets and captioned in different ways, and we are still finding more.<sup>16</sup> The names of the troupe members were deciphered from all of the various photo captions and press articles but particularly from an album of the 27 members compiled by the photographer Lindt in Melbourne in March 1893 and which was fortuitously procured and conserved by the British

Museum in London. Whilst the photographers often included short captions on their photos with names and tribal identities, there is much variance in both, making identification a confusing exercise, partly due to the difficulties that colonial Australians had in hearing the Aboriginal pronunciation and voice expression, and partly because Aboriginal people each carried multiple names and identity labels. However, each member of the troupe had a distinctive appearance, both in terms of face, physique and body scars, allowing a sorting of the multiple photos of each of the 27 individuals. Through the further analysis of all of the confusing captions together with known anthropological information on language and tribal groups, we were able to infer or deduce more objective biographic profiles for each individual. Advice on preferred orthographic spelling of the names and language groups was then sought from linguist Gavan Breen at the Institute for Aboriginal Development, who is an Australian linguistic expert on the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria the Mayi language group, the Wakaya and the Kalkadon peoples.<sup>17</sup>

Table 1 summarises the critical data on how we determined the identity of the troupe members.

Table 1: The 27 Wild Australia Show troupe members with conflicting biographical data

	Nominal spellings	Gender	Alternate names	English names	Tribal groups	Places of residence
<b>Wakaya Northern Territory</b>						
1	Kudajarnd	M	Cootajandra / Cootajanderra / Coontajanderra	[husband of Kulindab & Langinkap]	Warakaja / Workii / Woorki/ Wahki / Wooka / Woola	West of Georgina River / Lake Nash / Northern Territory
2	Narimbu	M	Narimboo / Narmbo / Nhambo		Workii / Woorki / Wakii / Wahki / Wooka	West of Georgina River / Northern Territory
3	Dangakura	M	Tungagora / Tanggaro / Tunggago		Workii / Woorki/ Wakii / Wahki	West of Georgina River / Northern Territory
4	Kulindab	F	Koolindaboo / Wahladap	[wife of Kudajarnd]	Workii / Woorki / Wakii / Wahki / Ingeldgee	West of Georgina River / Northern Territory
5	Langinkab	F	Langingubble / Langanjo	[wife of Kudajarnd]	Workii / Woorki / Wakii / Wahki / Wooka	West of Georgina River / Northern Territory
<b>Kalkadungu</b>						
6	Yangala	M	Nalkul / Yungulla	Billy	Kalkadon / Boogoolmurra / Wallinumah / Oirakilla	Croydon / Norman River / Gilbert River

Table 1: The 27 Wild Australia Show troupe members with conflicting biographical data - continued

	Nominal spellings	Gender	Alternate names	English names	Tribal groups	Places of residence
<b>Mayikulan</b>						
7	Kularinga	M	Cullaringo / Calahuringa / Cangareen / Canggareen	Jack [husband of Ramurra]	Mycoolin / Miccoolin / Micoolan / Oirakilla	Spear Creek / Croydon / Norman River
<b>Kuthant Norman River</b>						
8	Yungkwa	M	Yoongwat / Yoonwat / Yungquah	L. Charlie ['Left Hand' or 'Little?']	Karundi / Goodthoon / Kitoonda	Gilbert River / Kimberley [Telegraph Station]
9	Kuthanta	M	Jowaljow / Coothunda	Norman	Karundee / Kitoonda	Norman River / Kimberley [Telegraph Station]
10	Jerang	M	Jerrung / Jerang	Billy	Karundee / Kitoonda	Norman River / Kimberley [Telegraph Station]
<b>Walangama, Gilbert River</b>						
11	Werdubura	M	Weedburra / Werboora / Werpoora	Charlie	Walangama / Wallinumah / Bugulmura / Boogoolmurra / Boogool-murr / Oirakilla	Croydon / Norman River / Gilbert River
12	Juwanju	F	Oonjoonjoo / Juanju / Juanji	[wife of Madila]	Waluningma	Croydon / Gilbert River
13	Jerrakul	M	Andooracool / Jerracool	Jimmy	Wallinumah / Boogoolmurra / Oirakilla	Croydon / Norman River / Gilbert River
14	Arilda	M	Arraloor / Arillda	Bonny	Wallinumah / Oirakilla	Croydon / Norman River
15	Najjindin	M	Noijintoing / Nudgindin	Harry	Wallinumah / Oirakilla	Croydon / Norman River / Gilbert River
<b>Ariba Norman River</b>						
16	Ramura	F	Ramurra / Ramoorah	Maggie [wife of Kularinga]	Aripah / Arrieba	Croydon / Norman River / Gilbert River
<b>Kurtjar Gilbert River</b>						
17	Kungkardi	M	Cooncardi / Coongardi / Canggallie / Ookathunda	Toby	Kitoonda / Cungella	Gilbert River / Bynoe River / Normanton / Kimberley [Telegraph Station]
18	Ambirrtha	M	Umbertha / Baytha	Jimmy	Ongella / Oingella	Croydon / Gilbert River / Norman River
19	Kungarra	M	Coongarra / Armbulla / Noorananja	Johnny	Coongarrie	Gilbert River / Norman River
<b>Croydon Region</b>						
20	Nerrthu	M	Nerdtho / Naytoo	Jimmy	Oirakilla / Dugulla	Croydon / Norman River / Mitchell River

Table 1: The 27 Wild Australia Show troupe members with conflicting biographical data - continued

	Nominal spellings	Gender	Alternate names	English names	Tribal groups	Places of residence
21	Madila	M	Maytilla / Mettal / Madillah	Peter [husband of Juwanju]	Oirakilla / Goinchilla	Croydon / Gilbert River / Norman River
<b>Prince of Wales Island</b>						
22	Gida	M	Gidda / Geedah / Gigga / Misgidda / Missgidda	Tarbucket [husband of Kemaliya]	Eea	Prince of Wales Island
23	Kemaliya	F	Camilay / Camulla / Camaleea / Comali / Domali	Queen [wife of Gida]	Eea	Prince of Wales Island
24	Kawara	M	Cowaro / Cowra	[adopted son of Gida]	Eea	Prince of Wales Island / Moa Island
25	Bula	M	Bulloo / Bulla / Boolac / Boolack / Boolah	Willie	Eea / Cowrareega	Prince of Wales Island / Moorlug
26	Dugum	M	Dugum / Duhgoom / Doogoom / Diam	Doogoom	Eea / Cowrareega	Prince of Wales Island / Moorlug
<b>Mary River</b>						
27	Yamurra	M	Yamurra / Yamarra	Bob	Kabi Kabi / Cabbee / Gubbie / Towobbera / Tawabbara	Mary River / Owanyilla / Gootchie

The following points should be noted in reading the table:

- Total performers is 27 made up of 21 men, 5 women, and 1 male child.
- The **Nominal spelling** of each performer's name (column 1) is that nominated as the preferred orthographic rendition given available data and linguistic advice.
- Listed as **Alternate names** (column 3) are the various spellings of the performer's names from photographic captions, press articles and other historical documents.
- The listing of **English Names** (column 4) and relationships status, were mostly secured from Archibald Meston's writings as well as from press articles.
- The listed names of **Tribal Groups** and **Places of Residence** (column's 5 & 6) demonstrates the conflicting information that has been attached to the original photographs and published in other sources. These names may not be accurate but have proved useful in attempting to determine the actual

tribal groups and traditional country of each troupe member.

- In this list each troupe member has been grouped or placed by themselves based on research by Paul Memmott to determine their alignment with tribal groupings. This is done acknowledging that several of the troupe may have had multiple tribal group connections, for example the troupe member Yangala is grouped as 'Kalkadungu' while he could also be placed with the 'Walangama'. The two group identities under **Croydon Region** ('Dugulla' and 'Goinchilla') have not been ethnographically identified and their precise whereabouts are not known.

## PORTRAITS OF THE 27 WILD AUSTRALIA SHOW TROUPE MEMBERS

(Photographic selection by Michael Aird)

We present a selection of photographs, one of each member of the troupe assembled by Michael Aird. This is the first full published set of portraits of all 27 troupe members (figures 7 to 32).



FIG. 7. Kudajarnd. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy Queensland Museum EH550.

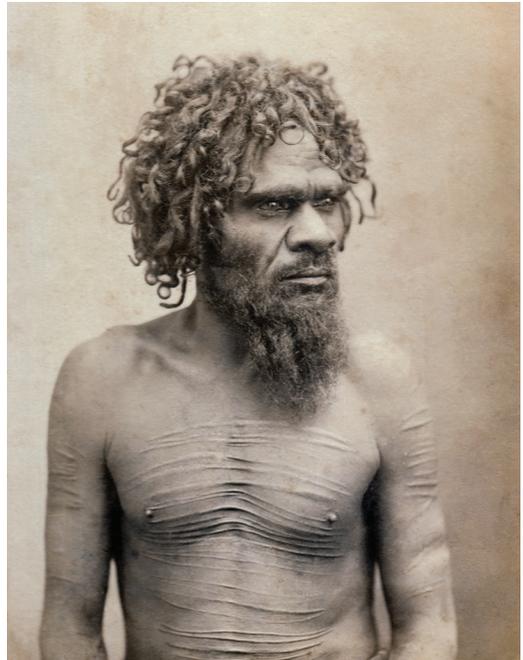


FIG. 8. Narimbu. Photo by Henry King. Courtesy State Library of Queensland ALL28477.



FIG. 9. Dangakura. Photo by Henry King. Courtesy Macleay Museum HP99.112.



FIG. 10. Kulindab. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy Queensland Museum EH789.



FIG. 11. Langinkab. Photo by Henry King. Courtesy Macleay Museum HP99.1.48.

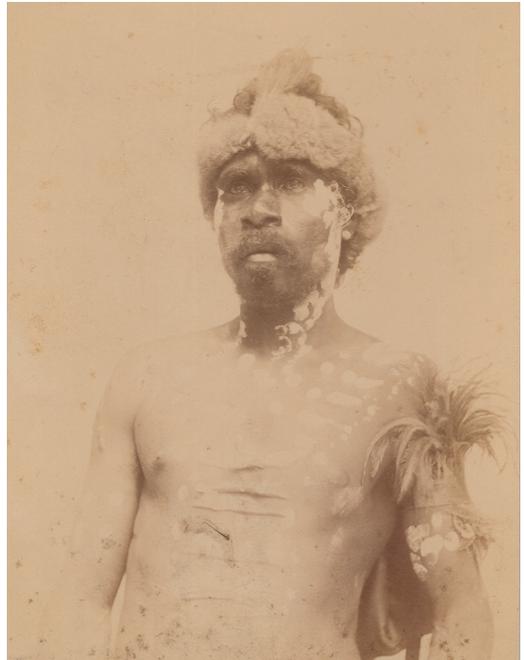


FIG. 12. Yangala. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy Queensland Museum EH1075.



FIG. 13. Kularinga. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy State Library of New South Wales a1348116u.



FIG. 14. Yungkwa. Photo by Henry King. Courtesy University of Queensland Anthropology Museum 32114.

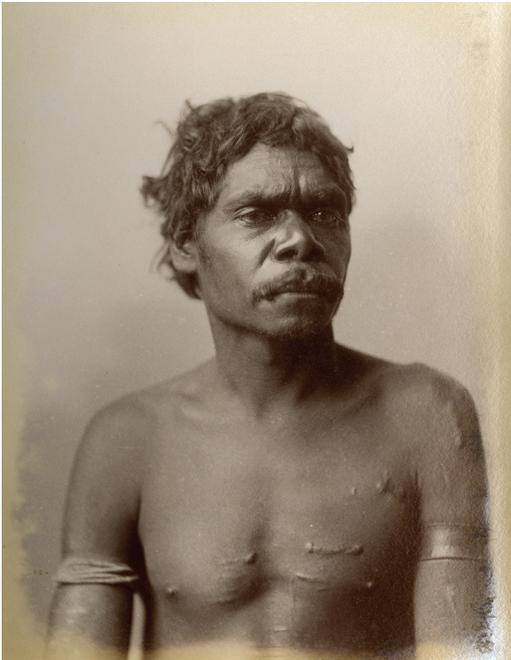


FIG. 15. Kuthanta. Photo by J.W. Lindt. © The Trustees of the British Museum Oc,A8.42.

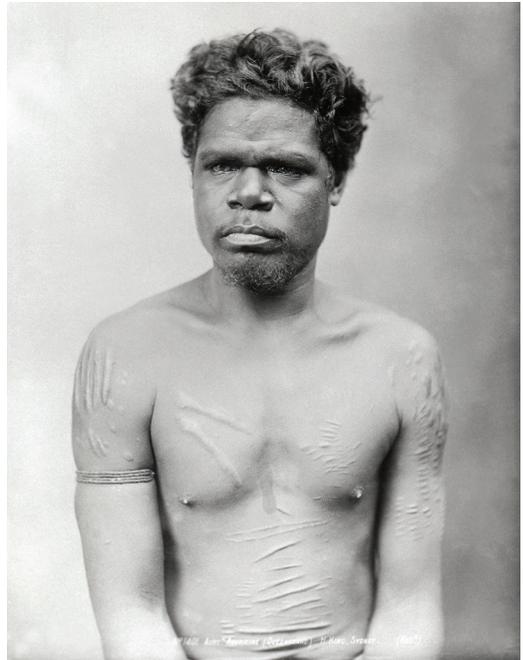


FIG. 16. Jerang. Photo by Henry King. Courtesy University of Queensland Anthropology Museum 32113.



FIG. 17. Werdbura. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy Queensland Museum EH791.



FIG. 18. Juwanju. Photo by J.W. Lindt. © The Trustees of the British Museum Oc,A8.29.



FIG. 19. Jerrakul. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy University of Queensland Anthropology Museum 32109.



FIG. 20. Arilda. Photo by J.W. Lindt. © The Trustees of the British Museum Oc,A8,32.



FIG. 21. Najindin. Photo by J.W. Lindt. © The Trustees of the British Museum Oc,A8,41.



FIG. 22. Ramura. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy State Library of New South Wales a1348087u.



FIG. 23. Kungkardi. Photo by Henry King. Courtesy State Library of Queensland All28477.



FIG. 24. Ambirrtha. Photo by Henry King. Courtesy Macleay Museum HP991.7.

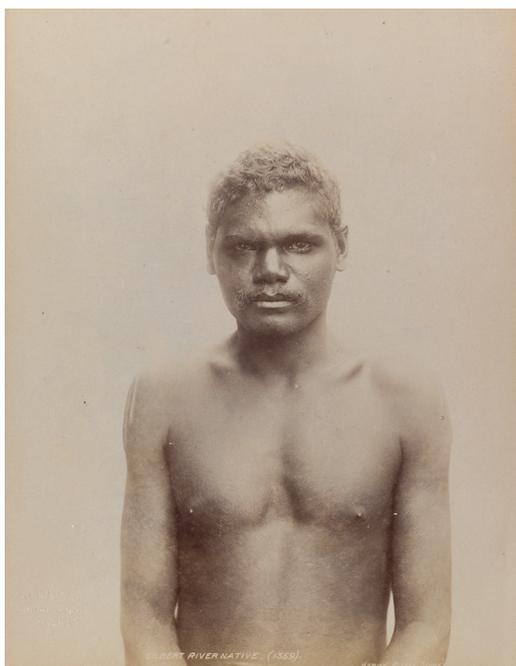


FIG. 25. Kungarra. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy State Library of New South Wales a1348148u.

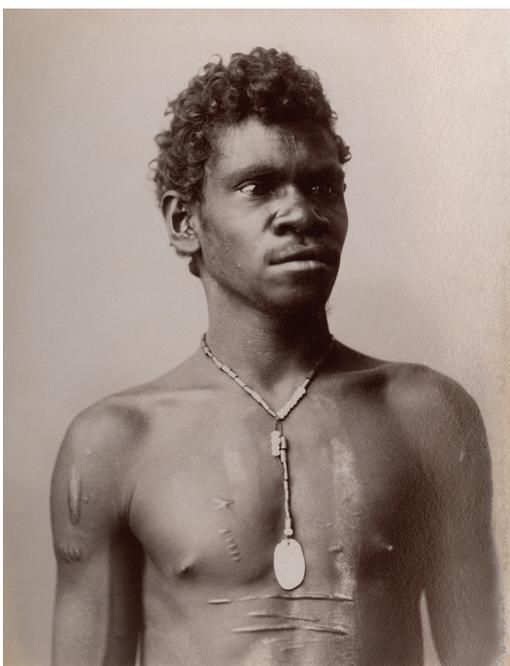


FIG. 26. Nerrthu. Photo by J.W. Lindt. © The Trustees of the British Museum Oc,A8,44.



FIG. 27. Madila. Photo by Henry King. Courtesy Macleay Museum HP99.134.



FIG. 28. Kemaliya and Gida. Photo by J.W. Lindt. © The Trustees of the British Museum Oc,A8.24.



FIG. 29. Kawara and Gida. Photo by J.W. Lindt. © The Trustees of the British Museum Oc,A8.25.



FIG. 30. Bula. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy Queensland Museum EH1125.

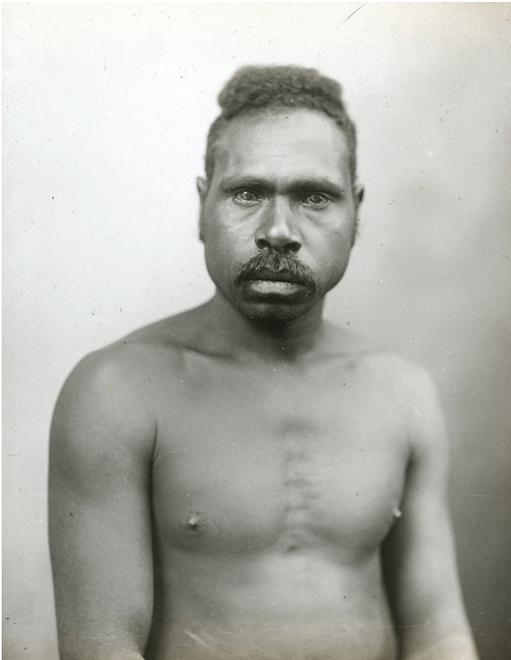


FIG. 31. Dugum. Photo by Henry King. Courtesy Macleay Museum HP99.1.17.

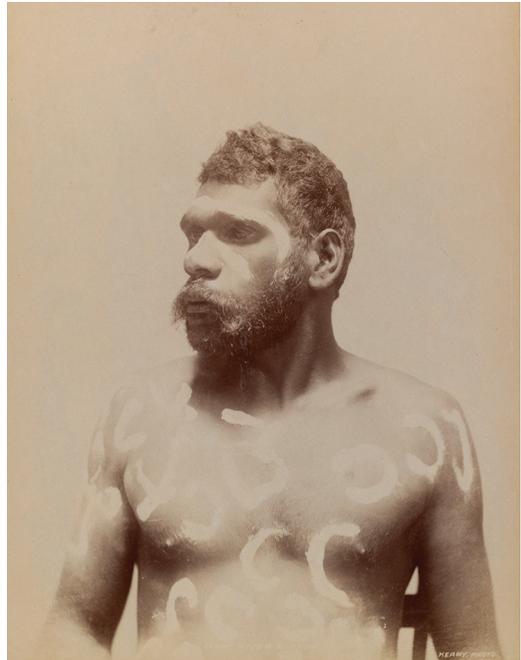


FIG. 32. Yamurra. Photo by Charles Kerry. Courtesy State Library of New South Wales a1348140u.

## CONCLUSION

We have described the process of identifying the 27 members of the Wild Australia Show troupe and of ascribing names and other identity attributes to each individual which was carried out in the early stages of our research project. In the Australian colonial photographic record of Aboriginal portraits, the vast majority of Aboriginal portraits are usually very poorly provenanced, with the performance names' often mis-spelt due to being initially misheard and mis-pronounced, and in a proportion of cases non-provenanced. Our research in visual anthropology represents a contribution to correcting this ethnocentric and racist legacy – the failure to recognise and acknowledge basic human identity and familial and social affiliations amongst our First Nations peoples. However, this paper only represents a start to exploring who these people were and their attitudes, motives and responses concerning their travel venture. In separate analyses we were at the time of writing

this, also preparing biographical essays on Kudajarnd, the Wakaya Elder, and Yamurra, the lone Kabi Kabi representative. A third biography that is contained in the current journal is that of Gida, the Kaurareg Elder and leader (Memmott et al., this volume).

The more in-depth constructions have been methodologically complex, given that the assembled set of anecdotes about these individuals which we have meticulously collected from a myriad of press clippings and archival sources, only amount to a small fraction of the jig-saw pieces needed to understand their lives. We have supplemented this limited data by reconstructing the frontier contact histories in each of the regions from where troupe members came in order to understand something of the likely experiences and psychological impacts on their individual psyches in the decade or so preceding the Wild Australia tour.

Understanding how the troupe members saw the 'other' (the colonial invaders) and how they interpreted the responses to their performances is methodologically

challenging but necessary to redressing the biases of colonial history to a more balanced keel. We are indebted to the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait consultative members of our research team who have assisted in this task.

A primary aim of this paper and of our research, as well as of the travelling museum exhibition of our findings to the descendant communities of the troupe, has been to facilitate a re-connection of contemporary Indigenous people to ancestral figures of the nineteenth century. The travelling exhibition of 12 banners, containing many of the photographs in this paper, was displayed in Mt

Isa, Tennant Creek, Normanton, Karumba, Croydon and Thursday Island during 2018–2020. Whilst the nature of the exhibition impacts varied from community to community, the potential to trigger emotional history responses can be gauged from the paper herein on Gida’s biography (Memmott et al., this volume). Another somewhat unexpected impact has been the growing response of various museums (e.g. Macleay Museum, British Museum) to adjust the provenance of the photographs in their collections according to our findings on names and identities which our now published comprehensively in this paper.

## □ ENDNOTES

1. e.g. Memmott (in prep) a, b.
2. Tamarama Beach is the south of Bondi Beach.
3. Barrett, Charles and A. S. Kenyon 1936. *Blackfellows of Australia*. Sun Book Company, Melbourne
4. Kudajarnnd and Langinkab.
5. Advice on preferred orthographic spelling of the performers names was sought from linguist Gavan Breen
6. Copies of these photographs are held in the collections of the Macleay Museum (HP83.3.13 & H83.3.14, the British Museum Oc,B74.1 and the Pitt Rivers Museum 1998\_270\_1-O).
7. *The Brisbane Courier*, 14 November 1892; *The Queensland* 19 November 1892, p. 967.
8. A glass lantern slide is held in the collection of the Queensland Museum EH5719. Another glass lantern slide of the same image is held in the private collection of Nicolas Peterson
9. Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (P.59865.ACH2 & N.22768.ACH2).
10. Queensland State Archives 2529
11. ‘Our photographer has “snapped” him during one of his visits to the seat of Government, the occasion being the annual distribution of blankets. The King is to be seen in the centre of the picture nursing a much-prized fox-terrier.’ (*The Queenslander* 2 September, p. 475).
12. *The Brisbane Courier*, 22 November 1893, p. 7.
13. This name was provided by my senior Alywarr consultants who were alive in the early decades of the twentieth century and who were confident they knew him (e.g. Paddy Woodman). The name which they gave, *Ilyambanda* does not coincide with the name recorded by Spencer and Gillen.
14. A case of confused and misleading provenance. See more on this in the paper by Price et al. (this volume)
15. We noted the possibility of our descriptions to be subject to some changes if new data came to light. This was in fact to be the case.
16. At the time of writing this paper for *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum*, the count was 115 individual portraits and 42 group portraits.
17. He was also assisted by linguist Paul Black.
18. In particular Alex Bond, Milton Savage, and Charles Passi.

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