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**Excavating MacGregor:
reconnecting a nineteenth century
collection from Papua New Guinea**

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The Goromani incident: seeking spoils from opportunistic theft in the Official collection from early colonial British New Guinea

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Material confiscated in 1898 by William MacGregor and his officers from abandoned houses after a punitive raid on the cluster of villages at Goromani, Upper Vanapa River in early colonial British New Guinea offers insights into the kinds of objects that might have been obtained for the Official ethnographic collection through negative reciprocity. In addition to ceremonial finery and valuable items stowed away in bags, drums dressed for ceremonies prior to raiding, stone artefacts, and arrows were confiscated after the raid by the British party. An analysis of handwriting on the labels written for the objects at the time of their collection identifies the personal choices for plunder of MacGregor and the officers who assisted him. This small collection also highlights classes of ethnographic objects that were highly favoured by British colonisers during the late nineteenth century. By comparing the Marind-Anim and Goromani assemblages with the entire Official collection, attributes of material acquired within the context of opportunistic theft are highlighted. Based on these cases, it might be possible to identify additional material within the Official collection, and potentially others from colonial British New Guinea, that were scavenged expediently following violent confrontations. The findings could also assist indigenous groups and museum curators in recognising material from early ethnographic collections from British New Guinea that might be considered for repatriation.

□ William MacGregor, British New Guinea, Goromani, Marind-Anim, Tugeri, punitive expedition, ethnographic collection, artefact labels

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During his time as Administrator (1888–1894) and Lieutenant Governor (1895–1898) of the colony of British New Guinea, Sir William MacGregor assembled a remarkable collection of ethnographic material known as the ‘Official collection,’ which is now held in the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery and the Queensland Museum (Torrence et al., Chapter 1 this volume; Quinnell 2000; Edmundson 2021). While MacGregor was conducting campaigns designed to pacify the indigenous population and bring the new colony of British New Guinea firmly under the control of the British government, it was inevitable that he and his deputies would become involved in violent clashes. Unlike the attack on the Marind-Anim headhunters described by Torrence et al. (Chapter 8 this volume),¹ where MacGregor’s aim was to inflict enough force so that a group of warriors would be reluctant to continue their aggressive raids on local communities in British New Guinea (BNG), the primary goal of his ‘inspections’ that resulted in violence was the investigation of murders or thefts involving westerners, as in the case of the punitive mission to Chads Bay (Awaiama) in November 1888, recounted by Davies (Chapter 4 this volume). Occasionally, when the attempt to apprehend offenders led to hostile encounters, MacGregor later sought retribution for the perceived crimes. Generally, only weapons were seized and then destroyed publicly (Quinnell 2000: 87), but on some occasions MacGregor or his agents also confiscated personal items left behind after villagers had fled their homes.

Given the small number of artefacts in the Official collection for which there is a secure provenience and date of collection, it is not possible to identify all the objects obtained during punitive actions. There are, however, some well-documented events that may provide useful clues about the character of the material obtained by MacGregor and his agents by opportunistic plunder following a violent confrontation with local people. We begin by considering the material confiscated following a well-documented incident at Goromani village in the Upper Vanapa River region of the Central Division

(Figure 1). Unlike much of the Official collection, which was acquired through gifting, silent trade or barter (balanced reciprocity as described in Torrence, Chapter 6 this volume), the Goromani material is an example of the type of social interaction that Sahlins (1972) termed ‘negative reciprocity’ or theft. An analysis of similarities between the Goromani assemblage and the material obtained from the Marind-Anim warriors provides insights about the character of material taken without permission by MacGregor and his officers. As illustrated in BOX 9.1, these findings might be useful in future research for identifying additional assemblages within the Official collection that lack provenience, but may have been obtained by MacGregor or his agents without the knowledge or permission of the owners. These two assemblages known to have been acquired following conflict also shed light on perhaps the most controversial of the many kinds of social contexts that played a role in early colonial relationships across the globe (e.g. Hicks 2020, but cf. Morphy and McKenzie 2021: 9).

GOROMANI PUNITIVE EVENT

Conflict between local communities and gold miners flared up sporadically in various parts of British New Guinea during MacGregor’s administration. Hostilities often arose when, against the advice of resident magistrates or government officials, western explorers and adventurers ventured into areas where government influence was not well established. For example, in August 1897 news that a group of miners had been robbed, attacked, and were besieged by some members of the Goromani tribe and their neighbours led MacGregor to undertake a relief expedition that ultimately led to violent retribution. The punitive action, including looting houses in the village to obtain material for the Official collection, is described within a ‘visit of inspection’ in MacGregor (1899a: xxi–xxii) and as an expanded report in MacGregor (1899b: 19–24) (Figure 1).

The apparent urgency of the case was reinforced by the fact that the leader of the besieged party, George

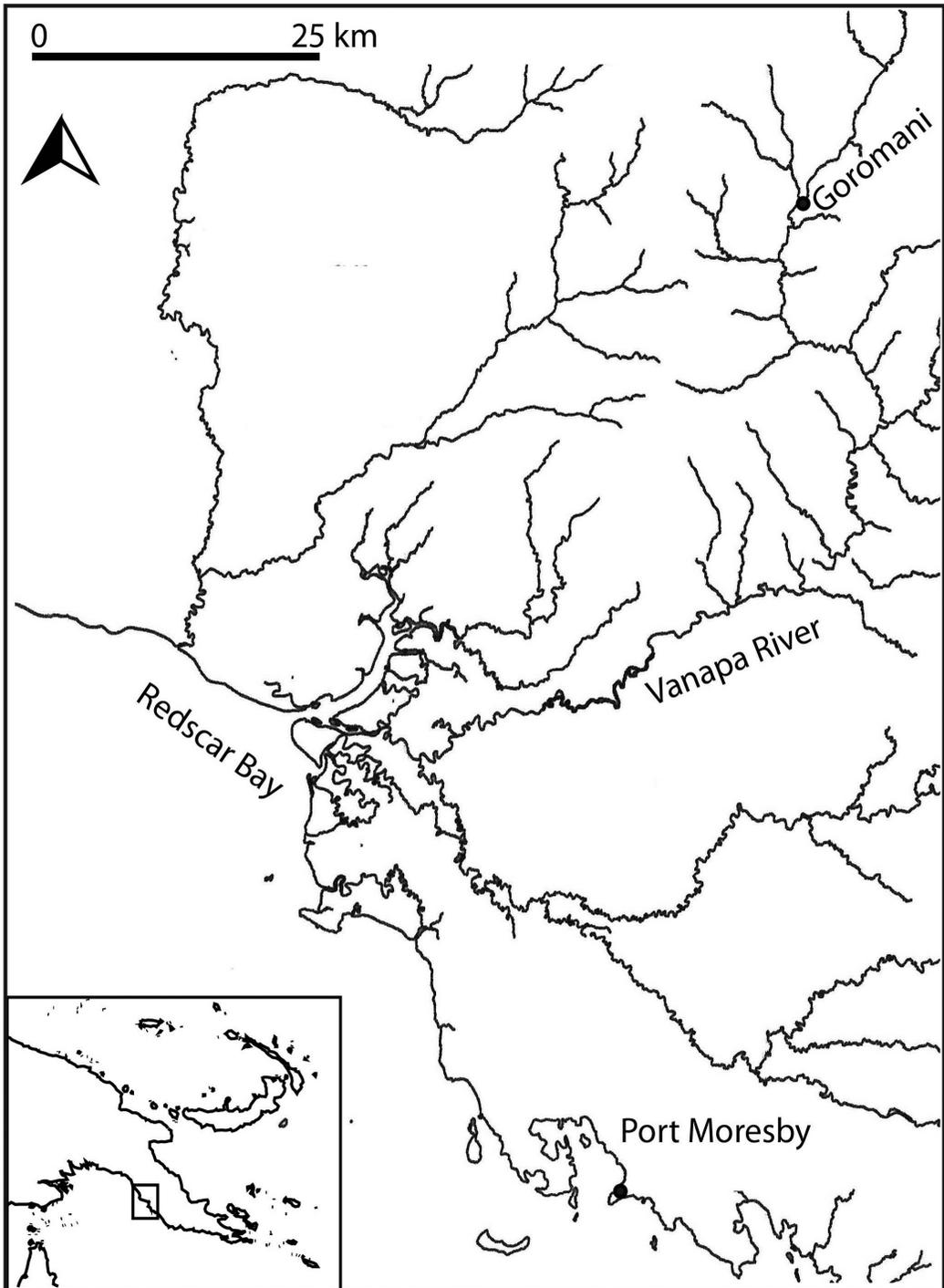


FIG. 1. Map showing the location of the Goromani region in the Upper Vanapa catchment. Drawing by Pamela Swadling.

Wriford, was a former Commandant of the Armed Native Constabulary (ANC). MacGregor considered the situation to be very serious because Wriford was 'a courageous man, and one that would not naturally take a despondent view of his position' (MacGregor 1899b:19). Consequently, MacGregor assembled a substantial group of men to accompany him to the region and arrived on September 30. Believing they were under threat of attack by hostile warriors, MacGregor decided to launch an offensive on Goromani village the following morning. The party which left Wriford's camp on 1 October included members of the Armed Native Constabulary, 'native prison warders' led by W. J. Kelly, a prospector whom MacGregor had enlisted, carriers from the Fly River, Kabadi, and Lealea together with others recruited from 'good-conduct prisoners', the Government Agent of the Rigo district, A.C. English, and two miners, Mr. Nettle and Mr. Peel (MacGregor 1899a:xiv; MacGregor 1899b:19). On the path to the village, the group passed the spot where Wriford's party had been robbed. The area was still littered with empty tins, wrapping-paper, bits of cloth, and labels.

Having arrived at the village, the ANC, supported by Kelly, English and two miners, led the attack. MacGregor and Wriford stayed back and with great difficulty restrained the carriers from joining the affray.

The warriors of the tribe were taken somewhat by surprise when the constabulary, with only their rifles and ammunition, rushed down the long grassy ridge on the nearest village. The great war chief of the tribe was killed, with six or eight other fighting men, and the whole population was instantly driven off the Goromani Hill and scattered over the mountain between the prospectors' camp, Iritumuni, and Goromani (MacGregor 1899a:xiv).

the detachment was completely routed, leaving their arms on the spot. In half an hour after we emerged from the forest there was not a living native of Goromani on the hill (MacGregor 1899b:23).

MacGregor rationalised the attack on Goromani village as a form of retribution for the murder of a miner, the wounding of Wriford's companion, and the theft of property. After his party had attacked and routed the villagers, he observed that

it was, unfortunately, too evident that a very severe punishment must be inflicted on the Goromani tribe; but it was decided that any further chastisement should be confined to the occupation of their houses and gardens (MacGregor 1899b:24).

MacGregor goes on to note that 'a few objects of interest, illustrative of the habits and life of these natives, were secured for the official ethnological collection' (MacGregor 1899b:24). Clearly one aspect of the 'further chastisement' was robbery of personal property from the Goromani villages.

Like the 1896 Marind-Anim assemblage (Torrence et al., Chapter 8 this volume), the material plundered from villages at Goromani contributes to an understanding of Papuan social life by highlighting aspects of material culture that were not normally accessible to westerners and are therefore rarely found in extant museum collections. Since the village was deserted when MacGregor confiscated the items, it is perhaps surprising that he limited himself to only 77 objects, including two net bags containing 12 items (Table 1). It seems MacGregor made more of a judicious selection from what had been left behind after the attack on this village than in the previous case involving the raid on the Marind-Anim warriors, where nearly 1600 objects were scavenged. In this regard, the Goromani assemblage is an important case because it represents a more judicious selection and therefore highlights the types of artefacts that most attracted British desires.

When compared to the 1896 incident involving Marind-Anim warriors, the difference in collecting intensity may also relate to MacGregor's prior knowledge of the local group. Before his routing of the Marind-Anim warriors, MacGregor had had little face to face contact with people from this cultural group. It is therefore plausible that he took advantage of an extraordinary, one-off

opportunity to acquire a comprehensive range of objects. In contrast, by this date MacGregor had already obtained a sizeable number of items from groups with similar cultural practices to the villagers at Goromani. Consequently, he may have made a careful selection among a range of items focussing on what he thought was most important for the Official collection. If we accept this hypothesis, then the composition of the Goromani assemblage is important because it reflects the kinds of objects that were not normally available to MacGregor through cross-cultural exchange, including items he thought were especially desirable for an ethnological collection.

Echoing the Marind-Anim assemblage (Torrence et al., Chapter 8 this volume), the collection from Goromani also includes bags with their contents. Unlike the former case, however, the two Goromani woven 'string' bags were probably not personal tote bags that normally accompanied their owners. It is more likely that they had been used to protect and store objects not in everyday use. It is also possible that these items had been deliberately

kept in a secure place and perhaps were hidden out of sight. We assume the Goromani bags were taken from inside a house where they might have been securely cached in the rafters among other valuable items and heirlooms, a common practice in British New Guinea, (Deveni Temu, personal communication).² The first bag (ER18754 (MAC 1359, PNGNMAG))³ contained what appears to have been a set of items entailing a ceremonial outfit, possibly the belongings of a single person (Figure 2).⁴ The paraphernalia consists of four components of an elaborate headdress constructed of cassowary plumes and black cockatoo feathers; two decorated bamboo ornaments that would have been held in the hand while dancing; and two small bags ornamented with glass beads, Oliva shells and feathers that were probably worn hung around the neck. An axe or knife made from hoop iron (ER18754h)⁵ had also been secreted within this bag. As discussed below, the inclusion of European trade goods on some of the objects indicates they would have been highly valued by the owners who presumably left them behind when they fled from the village during the attack by the British party.

TABLE. 1. Contents of the Goromani assemblage.

Artefact type	Category*	Number	Bag contents	Total
Axe-adze	Attractor	1	1	2
Arrow	Attractor/Exchange	16		16
Axe metal	Attractor		2	2
Bag	Exchange/Social	5	2	7
Barkcloth	Exchange/Utilitarian	2		2
Barkcloth beater	Utilitarian	1		1
Bow	Attractor	1		1
Charm	Magic/Sorcery	1		1
Club	Attractor	7		7
Club head	Attractor	3		3
Container feather	Utilitarian	2		2
Drum	Social/Exchange	3		3
Hammock	Utilitarian	1		1
Ornament	Social	1	2	3
Ornament head	Social	16	3	19
Slingstone	Utilitarian		2	2
Spatula, lime	Made for sale/Social	5		5
	Totals	65	12	77

*For definitions, see Torrence, Chapter 6 this volume.

In addition to the headdress stored in the string bag, MacGregor acquired 18 other similar objects, all with cassowary plumes as the centrepiece. Cockatoo or hawk feathers were included in several but were always a minor component. Outside of the cassowary headdresses from Goromani and those acquired following the raid on the Marind-Anim war party, by this date MacGregor had already collected nearly 50 cassowary head ornaments from the Western and North-East Divisions (Transfers 46 and 52; see Davies, Chapter 2 this volume). Since these kinds of ornament were not a novelty for him, we might conclude that his desire for them was insatiable or, perhaps, that they were considered an important element of the assemblage in the bag. Another possibility is that MacGregor was aware of the very

high value of these objects for local people and so may have kept these as part of his 'chastisement' as well as to enhance the Official collection.

MacGregor commented that the tail feathers of the bird of paradise were stored 'in bamboos or put between frames similar to those used by botanists for collecting or processing plants' (MacGregor 1899b:25). Two of these frames were confiscated (ER19043 (MAC667)) and (ER19044 (MAC666, PNGNMAG)), presumably from locations in the houses where they had been stored for safe keeping (Figure 3). It is possible that these had held plumes within them, but they appear to have been empty when the objects were registered at the Queensland Museum. Perhaps at the time the plumes were being worn by some of the Goromani warriors.



FIG. 2. Woven bag confiscated from Goromani village with a selection of the contents that were stored inside (all originally registered under ER18754a-h): **a.** dance ornament (MAC7365.1 or MAC7365.2, PNGNMAG); **b.** small woven bag decorated with trade beads (MAC1311, PNGNMAG); **c.** cassowary feather headdress (MAC1517, PNGNMAG); **d.** woven bag (MAC1359, PNGNMAG); **e.** cassowary feather headdress (MAC1518, PNGNMAG). Queensland Museum Photography, Gary Cranich with permission from the PNGNMAG.

People often placed perishable items in the roof near the fire where the smoke could help protect them from damp and insects (cf., Chan 2018:43). Since headdresses and plumes stored in frames are very rare objects in museum collections, it seems plausible that they were very important personal objects, very difficult to replace, and possibly also heirlooms with meaningful histories. Consequently, they were not usually made available for exchange with westerners.

The second netted bag (ER18956)⁶ also held a metal object, together with a stone axe-adze blade and two sling stones. The ‘tomahawk’ (ER18956a (MAC368)) stored in the bag was constructed with a European style iron blade hafted onto a shaft and held in place with an elaborate woven binding similar to those used on stone axe-adzes (Figure 4). As it had been carefully stored away in a bag, the object’s main value may have been within the context of ceremonial exchange rather than as a utilitarian tool, a role that might also have applied to the other

stone objects in the bag. MacGregor (1899b:24) notes that the people from Goromani did not use the sling. Given the sling stones were deliberately hidden inside a bag, perhaps they were considered as valued objects, possibly because they had been obtained through exchange and/or they were used as ‘charm’ stones in magic or sorcery. The same might apply to the unhafted stone axe-adze blade also stowed in the bag. Outside of the metal axe-adzes from the Marind-Anim and Goromani assemblages, MacGregor was only able to obtain three other metal axe-adzes from British New Guinea over nearly ten years. The rarity of metal items incorporated into local artefacts in the Official collection might explain why these two bags were chosen among others possibly available within the sacked Goromani village. MacGregor would have been aware of the high value of metal objects to most British New Guinea communities at this time and perhaps decided that removing several was appropriate retribution for the attacks on the miners.

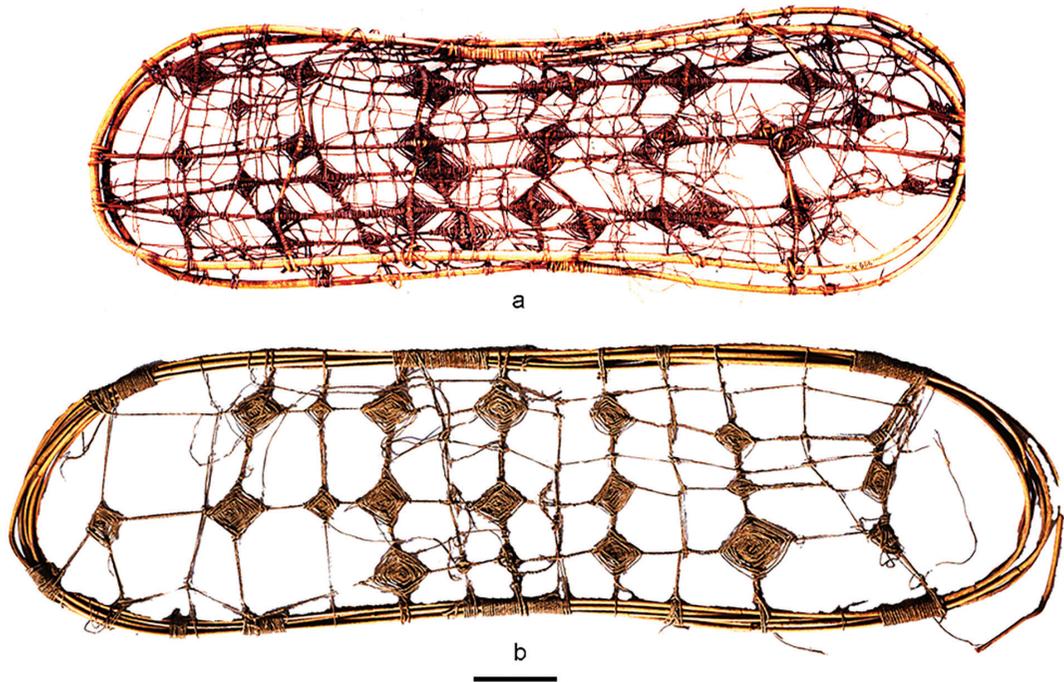


FIG. 3. Racks or presses for storing feather headdresses confiscated from Goromani village: **a.** ER19043 (MAC667); **b.** ER19044 (MAC666, PNGMAG). Scale bar: 5 cm. Queensland Museum Photography.

In addition to highlighting the kinds of objects that were highly valued by the villagers and therefore unlikely to be accessible to MacGregor in more normal circumstances, the Goromani assemblage also showcases the kinds of objects that held a particular attraction for him. For example, like many European collectors, MacGregor had a fascination with artefacts fashioned from human bone.

The leg bones of deceased relatives are worked up into long pins, which are stuck into the mass of woolly hair over the ear, a plume of coloured feathers being made fast to the blunt projecting end. This was to me to me a new use of the human skeleton (MacGregor 1899b:25).



FIG. 4. Metal axe blade with a woven cane collar was found in a bag taken from a house in Goromani village: (ER18956a MAC368). Scale bar: 1 cm. Queensland Museum Photography.

We assume that MacGregor is referring to an object that was registered as a dagger in the *Ethnology Register (New Guinea)* (Queensland Museum c.1889–1910) (ER18807), but was later more fully described in the *Register of the 'MacGregor' Collection of New Guinea Ethnology* (hereafter *MacGregor Register*) (Queensland Museum 1915–2001) as 'bone with feather plume and coix seeds'



FIG. 5. Bone hair ornament plundered from Goromani village is probably the object described by MacGregor (1899b:25) which is probably made from cassowary bone. See Lilje and Philp (2021: Figure 4) for a similar example: (ER18807, MAC1462). Scale bar: 1 cm. Queensland Museum Photography.

(MAC1462) (Figure 5).⁷ This was probably a head ornament. Further regarding the use of bone, MacGregor notes that ‘they carry a cassowary leg bone, so shaped it may be used as a spoon, knife or dagger’ (MacGregor 1899b:25) (Figure 6). The confusion over the function of these objects is carried over to the register where they were first described as ‘daggers’ in the *Ethnology Register*

(*New Guinea*) (Queensland Museum c.1889–1910), but some as ‘lime spatulas’ in the later *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001).

Like most contemporary male British collectors, MacGregor seems to have been especially drawn to stone artefacts (cf. Torrence and Clarke 2011), as reflected in the relatively large number taken from Goromani villages (Table 1). He comments on ‘well-made stone mallets for the manufacture of native cloth,’ like the barkcloth beater he obtained (ER18790 (MAC2738, PNGNMAG)) (Figure 7), although by this date he had already collected 16 examples of the same kind of object from other areas of British New Guinea. MacGregor (1899b:25) also mentions ‘clubs of a type peculiar to the district’. Of the seven clubs and three club heads



FIG. 6. These objects confiscated from Goromani village were referred to as ‘daggers’ when they were first registered but were reclassified as ‘lime spatulas’ when reregistered in the twentieth century. The original handwritten labels ‘Goromani Upper Vanapa’ are in MacGregor’s distinctive handwriting (see Davies et al., Chapter 5 this volume). They were made from cassowary bone: **a.** ER18777 (MAC2024); **b.** ER18779 (MAC1280, PNGNMAG); **c.** ER18778 (MAC6137). Scale bar: 1 cm. Queensland Museum Photography.



FIG. 7. Bark cloth beater taken from Goromani: (ER18790 (MAC2738, PNGNMAG)). Scale bar: 2 cm. Queensland Museum Photography.

taken from Goromani for the Official collection, four belong to a form widely referred to as 'pineapple' clubs, although Haddon (1900:234–36) chose the term 'knobbed'. These were most common in inland areas of British New Guinea (Figure 8). As with the barkcloth beater, these examples were not the first of their type that MacGregor had collected, but it seems he was keen to increase the numbers in the Official collection.

Following the tastes of British antiquarians, who were especially interested in ornaments associated with war and/or magic, often called 'face' or 'fighting' ornaments or 'battle charms,' MacGregor selected a rare example composed of 57 boar's tusks: ER18790 (MAC2738, PNGNMAG) (Figure 9). These kinds of ornaments were worn around the neck for ceremonies or during warfare. The bar stretching between the two sides could also be grasped by the teeth so that the tusks framed the wearer's face to create a fierce and dangerous appearance (e.g. MacGregor 1897:65). Only three other similar objects, all with fewer boar's tusks (i.e. 21 or 22), were obtained for the Official collection from parts of the North-East Division (cf. Williams 1930:39, Pl. VIIIb). Among these, one from Collingwood Bay (ER15967k (MAC2988, PNGNMAG)) was also acquired within

a bag containing other ritual or ceremonial items. The rarity of these items and their inclusion within bags emphasises the special value of boar's tusk ornaments which were not often freely given or traded to westerners.

Lastly, MacGregor obtained a hammock (ER18934)⁸ from one of the houses at Goromani, an artefact type that is very rare in the Official collection, probably because people were not normally eager to part with an essential component of their daily life and one whose production was labour intensive. The inclusion of this object illustrates MacGregor's aim to obtain as wide a range as possible of objects for the Official collection, including those associated with ordinary, daily activities.



FIG. 8. A 'pineapple' stone club head confiscated from Goromani ER19071 (MAC1812). Scale bar: 1 cm. Queensland Museum Photography.



FIG. 9. Boar's tusk ornament looted from Goromani: ER18848 (MAC 2986, PNGNMAG). Scale bar: 5 cm. Queensland Museum Photography.

PERSONAL PREFERENCES

Intriguing insights into how the Official collection was made can be gained from the original labels associated with 37 objects from the Goromani incident (Table 2). We assume that all the objects identified in the *Ethnology Register (New Guinea)* (Queensland Museum c.1889–1910) as from ‘Goromani’ or ‘Goromani Upp Vanapa’ originally had a label giving these localities, but unfortunately most of them have since been lost or discarded. Based on the systematic analysis of handwriting reported in Davies et al. (Chapter 5 this volume), four styles can be recognised among the Goromani labels. These can be assigned to MacGregor, Amadeo Guilianetti (Government Agent for the Interior who joined the party on October 3), A. C. English (Government Agent for the Rigo District), and an unknown person (Table 2). Among the remaining British men who were with MacGregor during the raid, the most likely person responsible for the unidentified hand is W. J. Kelly (a prospector whom MacGregor had enlisted), since George Wriford and the other miners returned to their camp shortly after the raid on the village was over.

One plausible hypothesis is that each man in MacGregor’s party collected objects separately and then labelled his own choices. For example, it makes sense that Kelly might have been most interested in the arrows and stone artefacts. In contrast, both English and Guilianetti were familiar with local material culture since previously they had acquired objects for the Official collection from the areas

TABLE. 2. Labelled items in the Goromani assemblage

ER Number	Type	Label Author
18754	Bag and 8 objects	Guilianetti
18930	Tapa cloth	?MacGregor
19031-43	16 arrows	Unknown
19045-7	3 drums	MacGregor
19051	Pineapple club	MacGregor
19054	Pineapple club	English
19056	Disc club	Unknown
18777-9	3 lime spatulas	MacGregor
19065	Adze	MacGregor

where they were working.⁹ They would have known the kinds of objects that were not usually offered up to westerners as well as those types highly prized by MacGregor. On this occasion they appear to have specifically targeted rare and unusual items.

To begin with, A. C. English labelled one of the pineapple clubs that MacGregor specifically referred to in his report, as noted above, perhaps following instructions from MacGregor. Recognition of the distinctive style of English’s script is based on a handwritten report on the Rigo District (English 1896). This provides multiple examples of his cursive and printed script and shows that he printed the letters ‘N’ and ‘U’ in a distinctive style (Figure 13A in Davies et al., Chapter 5). In another case, Amadeo Guilianetti appears to have removed the bag discussed above (ER18754 (MAC1359, PNGNMAG) in Figure 2) from one of the houses because a list in his handwriting, which describes its contents, is still preserved inside the bag (Figure 10). Two pieces of evidence support this interpretation. Firstly, based on a handwritten report by Guilianetti (1897), he wrote ‘Vanapa’ with a very distinctive style for the letter ‘V’ and this is identical to the initial letter in ‘Vanapa’ on the label. Secondly, a letter from Guilianetti to Charles de Vis on 29 April 1896 (Guilianetti 1896) shows he had an unusual and diagnostic pattern of handwriting for the letters ‘G’ and especially ‘d’, which are identical to those in ‘Goromani’ and ‘headdress’ on the list (Figure 10).

Guilianetti may also have been responsible for collecting the second bag with contents, but no similar list or artefact labels have survived to support that supposition. Possibly significant is the fact that MacGregor (1899a; 1899b) did not mention the metal artefacts nor the two sling stones stored in the second bag. He may have been preoccupied with other duties and did not discuss the objects with Guilianetti or, perhaps, he was just not interested in the items the other men had chosen.

MacGregor’s handwriting is also distinctive and can be used to identify labels that he wrote for objects taken from Goromani. Based on a comparison of c.750 labels on artefacts in the Official collection with

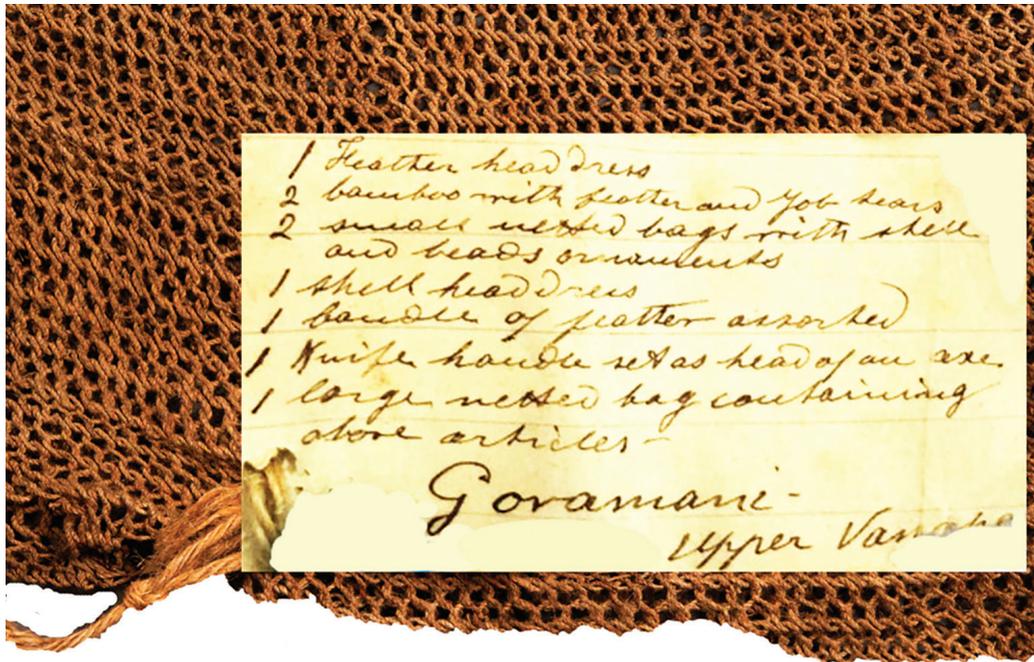


FIG. 10. List written by Amadeo Guilianetti describing objects stored in the bag shown in FIG. 2, which was confiscated from Goramani village. Photo by Susan M. Davies with background provided by Queensland Museum Photography, Gary Cranitch with permission from the PNGNMAG.



FIG. 11. Drums collected from Goramani had been decorated for ceremonies probably conducted in preparation for raids: **a.** ER19047 (MAC3291, PNGNMAG); **b.** ER19046 (MAC3292, PNGNMAG); **c.** ER19045 (MAC3188). Scale bar: 5 cm. Queensland Museum Photography.

historical sources, including MacGregor's diaries (1890–1892) and field notebook (MacGregor 1889), several distinctive attributes of his handwriting have been identified by Davies et al. (Chapter 5 this volume). These include the consistent use of uppercase lettering for village names (sometimes with lowercase letter i) and distinctive forms for several letters (e.g. G, T, S and F). Based on these key attributes, labels written by MacGregor can be identified on artefacts from Goromani: one pineapple club; one adze; three drums; and five bone daggers (Table 2). Apart from the arrows, the largest group of items bear labels written by MacGregor himself, demonstrating that he was actively involved in selecting and curating objects for the Official collection.

It is surprising, however, that MacGregor's account refers to the pineapple clubs and daggers he labelled but makes no mention of the drums whose labels bear his distinctive handwriting. This absence is strange since these three drums with their elaborate decorations of feathers and strings of coix seeds are very unusual (Figure 11). Especially dressed for ceremonies possibly conducted in preparation for the ongoing hostilities, the drums are adorned with bird plumes. Spiritual relationships with birds are common among groups in Papua New Guinea (e.g. Bulmer 1967). For example, Feld (1991) provides an example from the Kaluli people of the intimate and meaningful associations between the sounds made by the drum and bird calls. The eagle feathers are likely to have been a symbol of strength and the cassowary feathers might reference the aggressive nature of that animal. The decorated drums were possibly prepared in association with the recent raids the Goromani men had been making on enemies in other villages as well as those directed to the miners' camps. They contrast strongly with the plain, unadorned examples that comprise the other drums obtained for the Official collection from this region of British New Guinea. Clearly, drums bearing meaningful decorations were not normally exchanged to outsiders.

The handwriting analysis provides an interesting scenario about the day-to-day procedures used to

procure material for the Official collection. Probably in other cases MacGregor and his government employees also acquired objects independently of each other, although MacGregor was likely to have been responsible for most of the acquisitions. His interests would have been well known to the people who worked with him, but there was certainly scope for his agents to express their own preferences, as in the case of Guilianetti who clearly searched the houses at Goromani to find materials stowed away in bags or in the roof (e.g. feather presses in Figure 3). Although MacGregor was the mastermind and primary mover in building up the Official collection, the preferences of others in his group also contributed.

Secondly, the Goromani assemblage, which represents items taken rather than gifted or bartered, confirms that stone artefacts, weapons, and items with bird plumes were among those that were most highly desired by MacGregor. Finally, this group of objects provides useful insights into how Papuans normally dealt with MacGregor. At this date, objects such as decorated drums and large boar's teeth necklaces that were important in ceremonial life were rarely offered for exchange with westerners, although cassowary feathered objects had previously been available to MacGregor.

TRADE GOODS

It is notable that in his report MacGregor omits to mention that some objects incorporated materials commonly used as trade goods by westerners, such as glass beads, hoop iron and metal tomahawks, all of which were highly valued by Papuans (Davies 2011; Philp 2013) and consequently are very rare within the Official collection. For example, D'Alberty describing his trade with people in another inland region to the west of Goromani, writes that

To get iron they would have sold their skins. We had neither knives nor axes to spare, but we soon discovered that they were quite satisfied with old iron, or old hoops of barrels cut into little pieces (D'Alberty (1880:185)

Bell (2015:26) notes ‘the centrality of certain things – tobacco, tomahawks, and beads...to most, if not all, cross-cultural exchanges through which colonialism operated regionally’. At this date, however, his description is most applicable for coastal communities in British New Guinea, such as those in the Gulf region or among the islands in the southeast, who had experienced irregular contact with westerners since at least the early nineteenth century (see Hughes 1977:10–42). Hughes (1977:37) notes that even after the colony was established in 1888, throughout British New Guinea experience of foreign items was extremely patchy with many groups unaware of the properties of iron goods. In particular, western trade goods would have been very scarce commodities for inland dwellers like those at Goromani, because they were accessible only via a long chain of exchanges linking them with indigenous groups on the coast who might have been visited by a missionary or trader. It seems likely that the difficulty of acquiring the rare and novel metal objects, beads and cloth probably meant they were highly prized. Consequently, the objects that incorporated them were probably considered as special. It is therefore not surprising that they had been carefully stowed away in netted bags.

PUNITIVE COLLECTIONS

Bringing together the analyses of the Goromani and Marind-Anim assemblages (Torrence et al., Chapter 8 this volume) yields insights into cross cultural interactions in British New Guinea. These collections are especially important because they help identify categories of material that under normal circumstances were not usually made available for exchange with representatives of the British Government. Papuans may have withheld these types of objects because of their spiritual role in society (e.g. Marind-Anim headhunting ritual paraphernalia or decorated drums at Goromani), local intrinsic value (e.g. metal artefacts, glass beads), the difficulty of replacing them (woven capes or hammocks) or their association with a particular person or group (e.g. handbags,

elaborate headdresses). In addition, through the Goromani assemblage we gain invaluable insights into MacGregor’s own personal preferences: e.g. feathers; stone artefacts; things that reference ‘the other’ or ‘savage lifeways’ such as the tools made from what he assumed were human bones.

These biases are also exemplified by comparing the relative contribution of different kinds of objects in the two punitive assemblages with the larger Official collection (Table 3). The very high proportion of objects related to social activities in the plundered Goromani group when compared to the overall Official collection is perhaps the most notable difference. The difference in assemblage composition reflects the contrast between material associated with a warrior band with a high proportion of weapons and a village context where objects used in social exchanges and ceremonies were carefully stored away for special events. Although the Marind-Anim appear to have conducted rituals and ceremonies as part of their activities, the contribution of these objects to the total assemblage was relatively small. In contrast, the emphasis was on the weapons used in their raids and the raw materials and utilitarian objects to support their travels away from their home base. The difference was also magnified by the opportunity at Goromani to obtain objects highly valued by local communities and not normally offered in exchange with outsiders.

As shown in Table 3, bows and arrows are exceptionally dominant in the 1896 Marind-Anim assemblage (38 per cent) when compared to the proportion they comprise in the remainder of the Official collection (25 per cent), possibly because MacGregor was clearly attracted to the wide variety of forms of arrows recovered. The routing of the raiders also provided him with an unusual opportunity to collect a significant sample of arrow types not found in other parts of British New Guinea. In contrast, the Goromani group of arrows is relatively small, but their contribution to the whole group is comparable to the overall proportion of arrows in the entire Official collection. MacGregor (1899b:23) notes that ‘they have the bow and arrow, but it seems

to be used more for shooting fish and birds than for fighting'. The inclusion of these relatively plain arrows in his selection at Goromani suggests that MacGregor was especially interested in acquiring a broad range of the types of arrows and the types used in daily life for subsistence purposes were not usually available to him (see Philp, Chapter 12 this volume). Following many of his punitive actions, MacGregor destroyed the arrows or spears that were recovered to demonstrate that the Government had a 'no tolerance' policy regarding violence. He also prohibited local people from bringing weapons into his camp or for members of the native constabulary to collect them (see MacGregor 1897:43). However, after both the Marind-Anim and Goromani incidents, MacGregor was not dealing face to face with a group of men where he needed to make a point by destroying their weapons. Possibly in these unusual situations he could indulge his interest by acquiring a comprehensive collection of arrows.

Other kinds of material that are more abundant in the Marind-Anim assemblage than either the Goromani group or the Official collection belong to the broad categories of *Utilitarian* and *Raw Materials* (Table 3). Whereas it is understandable that the latter group was not systematically collected, but was mainly obtained as contents in handbags, the disparity between the total assemblage and the punitive collections in terms of artefacts with primarily pragmatic functions highlights the fact that many widely used material culture items were not often available to MacGregor or his agents. These seemingly ordinary objects were probably not offered for exchange because local people were reluctant to part with objects used frequently in everyday life. Although tools like bark cloth beaters, tongs, hammocks, pig catchers and awls were replaceable, the temporary loss of these for their owners may have been more inconvenient than offering up alternatives that were used less

TABLE. 3. Comparison of Marind-Anim (1896), Goromani, and Official assemblages in terms of categories that reflect their role in society. A detailed account of the Marind-Anim material is presented in Torrence et al. (Chapter 8 this volume).

Category*	Marind-Anim		Goromani		Official	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Attractor	21	1	15	19	1979	21
Attractor/Exchange	594	38	16	21	2361	25
Attractor/Magic	2	0	0	0	7	0
Exchange/Social	32	2	7	9	265	3
Exchange/Utilitarian	0	0	2	3	373	4
Made for Sale	27	2	0	0	758	8
Made for Sale/Social	33	2	5	6	395	4
Magic/Sorcery	46	3	1	1	84	1
Mourning	2	0	0	0	422	4
Raw Material	340	22	0	0	106	1
Social	148	9	22	29	1369	15
Social/Exchange	14	1	3	4	301	3
Social/Made for Sale	0	0	0	0	195	2
Utilitarian	233	15	6	8	776	8
Totals	1566	100	77	100	9391	100

* For definitions, see Torrence (Chapter 6 this volume).

often or were already stockpiled in readiness for exchange. Consequently, many classes of objects that were common within a village setting are relatively rare in the Official collection, except for situations like these where objects were plundered following a violent confrontation.

The material taken without permission from their owners by MacGregor and his party (i.e. by negative reciprocity or theft as discussed in Sahlins 1972:195–196) following raids on the Marind-Anim warriors camp and Goromani villages also yield key insights into cultural values and practices held by people on both sides of these violent clashes. The analysis of the material helps elucidate the character of objects that were highly desired by both westerners (what they chose to take) and indigenous groups (what they normally withheld from exchanges with outsiders). A comparison of the plundered material with the Official collection shows that the British were especially attracted to artefacts made of stone, bone, or feathers, were decorated, or comprised categories they had rarely been given access to (e.g. arrows, hammock, handbags, boar's tusk ornaments). In comparison, the objects highly valued by local people included metal and glass bead objects, items used in rituals, ceremonial costumes, and some domestic implements in daily use whose loss would cause considerable inconvenience. The rarity of these within the Official collection as a whole therefore suggests that, at a time when some scholars are questioning how much ethnographic material held by museums was acquired through deliberate plundering (e.g. Hicks 2020) or opportunistic theft (as in the cases in which MacGregor was involved), it could be useful to find methods for identifying material that may not have been freely given or offered for barter or sale and therefore which might be considered as appropriate for repatriation. The case studies of MacGregor's retaliations at Goromani and against a band of Marind-Anim warriors make the perhaps

obvious, although useful, point that during the late nineteenth century in British New Guinea, objects with high personal significance in both ceremonial and daily life together with those prized for their rarity as exchange items were not normally offered to foreigners for barter and may have not been freely given (see also Swadling et al., Chapter 10 this volume). The examples also suggest that some of the other woven bags in the Official collection that still retained their contents (see BOX 9.1) may have been taken from a local community without permission. It is important to note that some of the objects seized from Goromani were selected by the Papua New Guinea National Museum for repatriation which has been completed (see BOX 1.2 in Torrence et al., Chapter 1 this volume; Quinnell 2000). As many objects which held special significance to their ancestors are still identifiable as such by their modern descendants (see Chan 2018), further collaborative research should help clarify the probable social contexts of other undocumented items in the Official collection.

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□ ENDNOTES

1. In the late nineteenth century groups now commonly known as Marind-Anim people were often called 'Tugeri' and this term occurs in the British New Guinea official accounts.
2. For example, when exploring deserted houses in a village on the Purari River, MacGregor (1884:24) noted that 'the occupants had left bags of net suspended from the roof containing considerable native property, consisting of feathers of the goura pigeon and cassowary, bits of bone, clay for painting the face, pieces of flint, chips of bark, seeds, beans, etc. In some there was a very pretty-looking bag of a pattern not seen before'.
3. See Davies (Chapter 2 this volume) for details on the history of registers and registration systems at the Queensland Museum. Both the original and later registration numbers are provided (ER and MAC). If no museum is given, then the object is currently housed in the Queensland Museum. If it is elsewhere the museum will be named as follows: PNGNMAG is the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery; BM is the British Museum; AM is the Australian Museum; and MV is Museums Victoria.
4. Although the contents of the bag were originally registered as a group in the *Ethnology Register (New Guinea)* (Queensland Museum c.1889–1910), over time they became dispersed and were later given unique numbers in the *Register of the "Macgregor" Collection of New Guinea Ethnology* (hereafter *MacGregor Register*) (Queensland Museum 1915–2001).
5. The contents in the bag recorded by de Vis in the *Ethnology Register (New Guinea)* (Queensland Museum c.1889–1910) all under the same number (ER18754) do not exactly match the list described below, which was only recently found inside the bag (Figure 10). The 'knife handle set as a head of an axe' on the list may be the same object registered by de Vis as 'head dress ornament, piece of hoop iron with cane band at top'. Unfortunately, this item has not been relocated in the collection and was already missing when the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001) was made (see Davies, Chapter 2 this volume).
6. Since this object was not recorded in the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001), it is assumed that it is no longer extant in the collection.
7. The bone is not human and is probably cassowary.
8. This item is also assumed to be missing as it does not occur in the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001).
9. During his time in British New Guinea, English made a very large collection of over 100 stone clubs and axe-adzes which was later donated to the South Australian Museum.
10. ER15967 (MAC1322, PNGNMAG) (Figure 12) held 16 objects comprising five tortoise shell combs, six neck ornaments, two earrings, one forehead ornament, one 'battle charm' decorated with seeds and one 'fighting' ornament with 22 boars' tusks. ER16012 (MAC1339 PNGNMAG) (Figure 13) contained 18 items comprising ten arm ornaments; two forehead ornaments; five earrings wrapped in tapa cloth and one 'battle charm'.
11. Engraved markings on the combs are clan symbols among one of the clans in Wanigela (Bonshek 2013).

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PRECIOUS AND PRIVATE: BAGS WITH CONTENTS

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The two netted bags with contents confiscated from the Goromani villages following a punitive raid organised by MacGregor on October 1, 1898 (Torrence and Davies, Chapter 9 this volume) raise questions about the social context surrounding other similar woven items in the Official collection that have not yet been linked to specific events. Since the material stored in the Goromani bags comprises items that were rarely offered to MacGregor and his officers within the context of gifting or bartering (e.g. ceremonial paraphernalia and objects adorned with highly prized trade objects such as glass beads and metal items), it is perhaps not surprising that they had been obtained through theft. These two cases raise the issue whether some of the other bags with contents were also acquired through opportunistic plunder by MacGregor or other members of his staff. In this BOX we introduce two additional bags to illustrate the potential for future research which explores the possibility that further material was taken by MacGregor or members of his party through opportunistic plundering.

The Master List for the Official collection (Davies et al., Appendix 2 this volume; see Davies, Chapter 2 this volume) records 31 bags which held contents when they were registered at the Queensland Museum. Of these two from Goromani and 19 collected following the raid on the Marind-Anim warriors (Torrence et al., Chapter 8 this volume) can be linked to events recorded in the official records. To provide an example of the kinds of artefacts stored in the remaining bags, two are illustrated in Figures 12 and 13 along with most of

their contents¹⁰. Like those from Goromani (e.g. Figure 2), both these bags and the associated items (which were dispersed after they arrived at the QM) were chosen by staff from the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery for repatriation (Quinnell 2000), thereby demonstrating their significance for contemporary communities.

The two bags arrived at the Queensland Museum on March 1, 1897 as part of Transfer 60. It appears there was no associated documentation except perhaps labels (now missing) that provided their general localities: Collingwood Bay (Figure 12) and the North-East coast (Figure 13). Like the Goromani bag in Figure 2 (ER18754 (MAC1359 PNGNMAG)), both primarily housed various paraphernalia that would normally have been worn by men during ceremonial events including raids and warfare, although women have also been observed wearing some of the items. In addition to necklaces, arm and ear ornaments and elaborately engraved combs¹¹, several types of 'fighting mouth ornaments' were also stored in the bags. These included one made with boars' tusks embedded in a v-shaped framework (Figure 12g) or a round or rectangular shape object covered with red/black *Abrus precatorius* L. seeds. A range of indigenous term have been recorded for the latter type of object (e.g. *musikaka* or *semsem*), but is likely that each local group had their own name (e.g. Turner 1878; Bonshek 2013:16; Torrence & Clarke 2013:178-179). Both these artefacts were designed to give the wearer a fierce appearance when grasped in the mouth or worn on the chest while dancing or facing opponents during violent confrontations.

The similarity in the character of the contents of the Goromani bags with these two examples is striking enough to raise the question of whether they and some of the other undocumented bags with contents were also stolen from houses. Each bag contains a set of items which might comprise the apparel worn by a single person. Since the wide range of raw materials used to make the objects would have been sourced from many different contexts (e.g. boars' tusks, sea shells, tortoise shell, several types of seed, etc.) and would have required different sets of skills in their production (e.g.

weaving, stringing, cutting and engraving), the objects were probably made by several different people, some of whom were experts in their craft having gained the requisite skills over some years. Given the time effort and skill needed to make the objects, it seems likely that some were heirlooms passed down within kin groups. The bags also contain objects commonly worn primarily by women during the long period of mourning after the death of their husband (Figure 12c; Figure 13b, c, d, e). Perhaps the items represent mementos of the mourning period or the person who wore them or were



FIG. 12 String bag from Collingwood Bay with the objects that were originally stored inside when it was registered at the Queensland Museum. The bag and all the objects were registered as ER15967a-p in the *Ethnology Register (New Guinea)* (Queensland Museum c.1889-1910: **a.** string bag (MAC1322, PNGNMAG); **b.** engraved tortoise shell comb (MAC1452, PNGNMAG); **c.** earring with coix seeds pendants (MAC1407, PNGNMAG); **d.** seed necklace (MAC4454, PNGNMAG); **e.** 'fighting' ornament or 'battle charm' made with boars' tusks, *Abrus precatorius* L. seeds and shell (MAC1334, PNGNMAG); **f.** shell necklace (MAC4383, PNGNMAG); **g.** face or 'fighting' ornament or 'battle charm' made with boars' tusks (MAC2988, PNGNMAG); **h.** shell neck or forehead ornament (MAC2880, PNGNMAG); **i.** dogs' teeth necklace (MAC3016, PNGNMAG); **j.** seed necklace (MAC4453, PNGNMAG); **k.** seed neck ornament (MAC7659, PNGNMAG); **l.** engraved tortoise shell comb with string possibly used for attachment to other parts to form a headdress (MAC1451, PNGNMAG). Queensland Museum photography, Gary Cranich with permission of the PNGNMAG.

kept to remember the person who was mourned. Each bag would probably have been owned and cherished by a person, family or clan group and kept stored in a safe and secure place.

It is hard to imagine why these bags and these highly meaningful objects would be offered up for trade with MacGregor and his party. Had they been stolen? This hypothesis certainly merits further historical research to determine if any of the bags with contents can be

linked to known episodes of opportunistic plundering. Another alternative that could also be considered is that the bags were exchanged because the owner had passed away and the community wanted to remove items with dangerous powers, as described by Barker (2000) for a recent case involving Maisen speakers in the Collingwood Bay region. Hopefully, these examples might stimulate further research into the social contexts in which bags with contents were acquired for the Official collection.



FIG. 13 String bag from the North-East Coast of British New Guinea with many of the objects it held when it was registered at the Queensland Museum. The bag and all the objects were registered as ER16012 in the *Ethnology Register (New Guinea)* (Queensland Museum c.1889-1910): **a.** string bag (MAC1339, PNGNMAG); **b.** shell forehead ornament with cut cowrie shells (MAC2842); **c.** three arm ornaments of three rows decorated with coix seeds (MAC2531, PNGNMAG); **d.** arm ornament of seven rows decorated with coix seeds (MAC2522, PNGNMAG); **e.** forehead ornament with horizontal bands and vertical pendants decorated with coix seeds (MAC2311, PNGNMAG); **f.** six armllets of plaited cane (MAC2178, PNGNMAG); **g.** five earrings made from coconut and decorated with coix seeds wrapped together in a piece of tapa cloth (MAC1329, PNGNMAG); **h.** 'battle charm' or 'mouth' ornament made with *Abrus precatorius* L. seeds mounted on bark (original feathers attached now missing). Queensland Museum photography, Gary Cranich with permission of the PNGNMAG.