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Andrew Goldie in New Guinea 1875–1879: Memoir of a natural history collector
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CHAPTER 1

The Andrew Goldie Manuscript

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Andrew Goldie arrived in New Guinea in March 1876 to hunt plants for the London nurseryman B.S. Williams and is recognised as perhaps the most important early commercial collector of New Guinea natural history specimens and ethnology. He published some newspaper reports of his travels and left an unpublished memoir of his 1876-1879 years. This chapter explains the significance of the memoir and briefly describes the process that brought it to publication.

▣ *Goldie, natural history, ethnology, New Guinea, imperialism, colonisation.*

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This book brings to fruition a project that originated in a chance conversation that took place during the Fourth International Congress of Maritime History at Corfu in 2004. New Guinea came up over morning tea and Dr Martin Bellamy, head of research at Glasgow Museums, mentioned that at the Museum of the Cumbraes at Millport on the island of Great Cumbrae in the Firth of Clyde there was a collection of artefacts and papers that had once belonged to an adventurous Scot who had ended up in New Guinea; Andrew Goldie—had we heard of him? Someone recalled Goldie as an explorer and Port Moresby’s first storekeeper, some time in the 1870s. Martin had used a Goldie diary to write about an 1863 Indian Ocean encounter between the famous Confederate raider CSS *Alabama* and *Queen of Beauty*, the immigrant ship that first took the Scot to the antipodes. He explained that Goldie had travelled to New Guinea hunting plants for a prominent London nurseryman and that he described his early exploits in a 170-page

hand written unfinished memoir that was held in the Millport collection. The memoir sparked considerable interest and Martin, quick to concede he was no New Guinea expert, kindly agreed to arrange for a copy to be made in order that its significance might be further assessed. When the manuscript arrived in Australia I passed it to Professor Clive Moore of the University of Queensland, a leading Pacific historian, and we all agreed that it should be made more widely available.

Goldie’s memoir, reproduced in this volume, covers the period from May 1875 until May 1879, most of which he spent on the southeast coast of New Guinea, in the earliest years of colonisation before the region’s formal annexation to the British Empire in the 1880s. It offers a rare window onto a world where, although colonial commercial exploitation had begun, vibrant, uninterrupted, indigenous economies were still circulating trade in wide-ranging interlocking maritime exchanges that extended east to the Louisiade Archipelago and west into

Torres Strait. When Goldie arrived, Sydney-based *bêche-de-mer* fishers and pearl-shell-ers had been exploiting Torres Strait's rich marine resources for a decade and their activities now extended to New Guinea. The London Missionary Society (LMS) followed in their wake. LMS missionaries began to proselytize in Torres Strait in 1871, extended their work to the Gulf of Papua in 1873, before establishing the first permanent British settlement in New Guinea at Port Moresby in 1874. Nevertheless, in the years covered in Goldie's memoir, Mer (Murray Island) in Torres Strait remained the headquarters of the LMS Papua mission. On the initiative of the Queensland government, in 1864 a joint imperial-colonial outpost called Somerset was established at the eastern tip of Cape York Peninsula to serve, among other things, as an administration centre for Torres Strait and a staging point for the colonisation of New Guinea. It was relocated to Thursday Island in 1877, and from there Queensland officials administered whatever British civilian law there was in Torres Strait and on the adjacent coasts. By the mid-1870s Cooktown, which sprang up during the Palmer River

gold rush, emerged as another port for traders, scientists and natural history collectors bound for New Guinea, and with them went a multi-ethnic, mostly Pacific Islander workforce, drawn largely from the Torres Strait maritime industries. Goldie regularly travelled through these fledgling settlements that delineated and gave entry to a new great unknown, encompassing thousands of kilometres of territory, scores of ethnicities and countless new species of flora and fauna, and his memoir illustrates just how interconnected Queensland, Torres Strait and southeast New Guinea were in this era.

In the memoir Goldie is intent on telling his own story, but it intersects with the stories of numerous others who were significant players on this remote frontier. By the late 1870s, he had become perhaps the most successful trader on the southeast coast and familiar with many prominent Papuans, such as Keriopa, Heni, Rae and Poi, who feature in the memoir. There are also frequent references to the Pacific Islanders who acted as leading hands, guides and pilots, men like Bob Samoa and Jimmy Caledonie, both of whom worked for Goldie at one time or another. He knew the controversial Italian



FIG. 1. Garrison House, now the Museum of the Cumbræ, Millport (Mullins, 2008).



FIG. 2. South Sea Teachers. Peri and Rautoka sitting together front left, c.1885. (WG Lawes, SOAS/CWM/LMS/PNG/PHOTO/01/001/056).

naturalist Luigi d'Albertis, who was the first European to ascend the Fly River. He met Sir William Macleay, patron of colonial science and leader of the 1875 *Chevert* Expedition to New Guinea. Indeed, Goldie knew most of the first wave of New Guinea natural scientists; Octavius C. Stone, Lawrence Hargrave, better known as Australia's pioneering aviator, Kendall Broadbent, Alexander Morton, William Blunden and the German Carl Hunstein. Then there were the New Guinea missionaries, who in their time were even more famous than the scientists; Samuel McFarlane and his wife Elizabeth, William and Fanny Lawes, William and Mary Turner, and James and Jane Chalmers. Goldie's memoir also offers insights into the lives of the LMS's Pacific Islander evangelists Rautoka, Peri, and Gucheng, who although less well known outside the region, were indispensable to the process of colonisation, not only as missionaries but also as intermediaries between locals and strangers.

Goldie often dropped names into his narrative with little or no background explanation and referred to some individuals without identifying them by name at all, most notably the black Jamaican sailor Douglas Pitt, who was notorious in the 1870s but largely forgotten now beyond Torres Strait. It was Goldie's obscure reference to a violent incident involving Pitt that first suggested the idea that if the memoir were to be published it should be annotated. What began as a necessity, to assist readers comprehend Goldie's narrative more easily, soon acquired the quality of a virtue as it became apparent that accurate and thorough annotation could transform the memoir into a richly textured history of the early years of colonisation. Annotation then became intrinsic to what was now a publication project, not simply to sketch in background detail, but to draw meaningful connections between the people, places and events threaded through Goldie's inherently interesting story. Little

was known about Goldie himself however, so if an annotated memoir were to be published it should be prefaced by a short biography of the man himself.

With this in mind we approached Queensland Museum, an institution responsible for some of the most important scholarly work published about Torres Strait and the connections between Torres Strait Islanders and Papuans. Unbeknown to us, the Museum had an interest in Goldie, Susan Davies only recently having completed an appraisal of the ethnological artefacts the institution had acquired from him in the 1880s (Davies, 2007). Although Goldie initially went to New Guinea in search of new plants, he quickly turned his hand to more general collecting. He made a significant contribution to the natural sciences and became one of the most important collectors of Papuan artefacts in the pre-annexation era. Until now no detailed appraisal of Goldie's work has been undertaken and it is of particular interest because he was a commercial collector rather than a scientist attached to an institution or employed by a wealthy patron, as was common in the nineteenth century; in the area of ethnology little attention has been paid to the methodology of the trader-collector. The memoir invites numerous questions. For instance, Goldie was a well-qualified, experienced nurseryman when he went to New Guinea. Did his horticultural training influence his ethnological collecting, in the way that the natural history backgrounds of Australia's first generation of anthropologists influenced their practice? (Peterson, Allen & Hamby, 2008: 15). In Chapter 4 of this volume Susan Davies undertakes a detailed analysis of Goldie's ethnological collecting.

The Goldie artefacts themselves are a tangible connection to the lives of the people who made, traded and collected them, and to their place and time. Those held by Queensland Museum and the Museum of the Cumbraes are important also because most of what Goldie collected in the 1870s was lost in Sydney's Garden Palace

Fire of 1882. Many of the Goldie pieces that survive in these collections are rare and among the best of their type, but beyond their aesthetic appeal and ethnographic significance they also serve as reminders of the part that Australian science and scientific institutions played in the colonisation of New Guinea. To make these important artefacts more accessible to scholars and the general public alike descriptive catalogues of the Queensland Museum and the Museum of the Cumbraes Goldie collections are provided in Chapter 5 of this volume.

In 1991, Paul Fox, in a brief but penetrating analysis, made the point that Goldie and the Museums that were his patrons and customers were intrinsic to the colonial project because together they 'delineated New Guinea according to a European scientific vision' thus 'redefining space and claiming it conceptually before a European power physically occupied it' (Fox, 1990: 678). This is true of Goldie the collector, but Goldie the trader went further than the mere conceptual acquisition of land; he meant to be a planter. Moreover, by the time poor health forced him to retire in 1890, Goldie had built a successful business at Port Moresby, the foundation of which was trade in scientific specimens and Papuan artefacts. When he sold out to Burns Philp & Co. he gave that firm, which more than any other is identified with Australian imperialism, its first foothold in the western Pacific. Thus, Goldie allows a direct line to be drawn from the transactions of natural scientists and scientific institutions to fully blown mercantile colonialism, but to appreciate his significance in the overall scheme of things his career needs to be considered in all its parts.

The pages that follow contain a short biography of Andrew Goldie, his memoir fully annotated, an analysis of his collecting and descriptive catalogues of the Goldie artefacts held at Queensland Museum and the Museum of the Cumbraes. The annotation was done under the direction of Clive Moore and researched and

written by Clive Moore and Steve Mullins. Although the memoir is an unfinished draft it reads well. It was therefore decided to reproduce it in a form as faithful as possible to the original. This brings the reader close to the man himself, especially where it is apparent that he was in two minds about how something should be expressed or whether it be mentioned at all. Two additional sections of text have been added where Goldie indicated in marginal notes that that was his intention. One is taken from the journal of his first voyage from Somerset, Cape York, to Port Moresby in March 1876 in the missionary steamer *Ellengowan*, published in two parts in the Sydney Presbyterian newspaper, *The Australian Witness*. The second is Baron Ferdinand von Mueller's scientific description of two plants discovered by Goldie, *Bauhinia williamsii* and *Combretum Goldieanum*, published in von Mueller's *Descriptive notes on Papuan plants* (1875-1890). These sections have

been rendered in italics to distinguish them from what was originally handwritten text.

Goldie also indicated in notes places where he intended to include a mud map of Millport Harbour, which he discovered and named, and a sketch of his first vessel, the small ketch *Explorer*. Although the original mud map exists in the Goldie Collection at Millport, it is too faint to reproduce. However, a sketch map of Goldie's 1877 expeditions inland from Port Moresby has been found and it has been included. No original sketch of *Explorer* could be located, but two were published in the *Illustrated Australian News* of 5 September 1883, and one of these fits the circumstances Goldie describes in his text. This has been inserted instead. Three sketches done by James Shaw, a member of Goldie's party, illustrating scenes from Goldie's 1877-1878 expeditions have also been included in the memoir.

