



Miscellanea

Australian Objects in the Religious Studies Collection at the University of Münster

The “Pater Worms Collection” as a Case of Inter-Religious Contact

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ABSTRACT The paper discusses the Australian artefacts in the collection of the Institute for the Study of Religion at the University of Münster. The collection was established in the 1950s with the intention to exemplify, for students of Catholic theology, the wide variety of material expressions developed by different religious traditions in the world. We discuss how these objects from indigenous Australian cultures were included in a collection of religious artefacts owned by the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Münster and to what extent the founder of the collection, Anton Antweiler, considered the objects expressions of the religions and religious history of Australia. To this end, the correspondence between Worms, the missionary who sent these objects to Germany, and Antweiler has been analysed. In addition, Worms’ German treatise on the religions of Australia (*Die Religionen der Südsee und Australiens*) was consulted. Based on these sources, Worms’ perception of the religions and cultures of Australia and how it informed his collecting activities can be reconstructed at least partially. At the same time, the paper attempts to direct the focus at the objects themselves as bearers of information. The material artefacts that were collected, described and finally sent to Münster to be exhibited tell their own stories about cultural and religious contact, in Australia as well as in Germany, where they were shown to students of Catholic Theology and are accessible for students and staff members until today.

KEYWORDS Missionary collections, Australian religions, Pallottine missionaries, religious contact, religion and materiality

Introduction

In this paper, we analyze a small collection of Australian objects kept in the University of Münster, Germany, as part of a religious studies collection at the Institute for the Study of Religion (*Institut für Religionswissenschaft*). This collection was founded by Anton Antweiler, professor of Catholic Theology, in the 1950s and it was meant to illustrate to his students the variety of material expressions of different religious traditions in the world. While it contains mostly objects from Asian countries, there are a few artifacts from other regions of the world. While the collection is rather small and not (at least for now) publicly accessible, it presents an interesting field of research regarding questions of presenting and representing non-Christian traditions in a Catholic academic environment. [1]

Some of the pieces kept in the collection stem from missionary activities, and the collection was also used and studied by Antweiler's colleagues in Missiology in the same Faculty. As such, the collection is also a window to missionary contact zones and how they were embedded in the theological thinking about non-Christian traditions. In this paper, we will particularly focus on this aspect and so continue the previous research of the collection.¹ [2]

One set of objects in this collection, the "Worms collection," was assembled and sent to Münster by Ernest Worms, missionary of the Pallottines, officially known as the Society of the Catholic Apostolate (*Societas Apostolatus Catholici*, SAC). He spent more than 30 years of his life in Australia and became a renowned expert for Aboriginal societies, specifically their languages, his basic goal being to further and facilitate Catholic missionary activities in Australia (McGregor 2017, 335–36). [3]

Although much of his linguistic and ethnographic work has been criticized and revised by later generations of scholars (McGregor 2017, 350), he has left a body of publications that—from our contemporary perspective—is a telling source about how Worms as a Catholic missionary and self-trained ethnographer saw the indigenous communities and related their worldviews to his Christian background. What is less well-known is that Worms was also an avid collector of artifacts and travelled long distances to see stone carvings and other ethnographically relevant sites. Most of his photographs and the objects he collected were sent to the Pallottine Seminary in Limburg (Germany), but he also sent objects to other institutions, private collectors and to Professor Antweiler in Münster. This set of objects is the material basis of our current analysis. [4]

We are approaching this collection with the following questions: What was the intention of including these objects from indigenous Australian cultures in a collection of religious objects in the Catholic Faculty at Münster University? In how far did Antweiler assume that these objects represented something about the religions and religious history of Australia? How do these objects tell us something about how Antweiler viewed the Australian indigenous societies and their religious traditions? What, eventually, do these objects tell us about the contact between Christian mission (represented by Worms) and Aboriginal cultures? As such, this collection gives testimony of the relationship between Antweiler and Worms: These men, both trained Catholic theologians, but with very different careers, produced a specific window to the Aboriginal cultures by assembling the objects. [5]

Since much has been written about the missionary, linguistic and ethnographic work of Worms, we clearly do not understand our analysis as a significant extension of this discourse. [6]

1 A brief description of the collection is given by Antweiler (1965). For previous research on the collection, see Krüger and Radermacher (2020) and Krüger and Radermacher (2021).

However, we seek to draw attention to the idea of *objects as informants*: The material objects collected, described, sent and displayed tell stories about cultural and religious contact both in Australia and in Germany, where they were shown to students of Catholic theology and are still available for staff and students to this day.

Moreover, it is not our intention to study these objects from an ethnographic or Aboriginal studies perspective. Both authors are not trained as ethnographers of Australian indigenous peoples. While we have consulted such experts about the objects, it is not our primary goal to investigate their exact provenance—indeed, this would often be pointless, considering the scarce documentation. Rather, our goal is related to the history of a collection, to the history of mission in Australia, and, most importantly, to the history of contact between Christian and non-Christian worldviews in the context of missionary work as it is documented in and by these objects—mute witnesses, as it were. Our goal, then, is to ‘make them speak’ and tell us their stories about their role as agents in and bearers of cultural and religious contact. [7]

We work on the basis of the material artifacts and rely heavily on archival documents kept in the University of Münster. These documents have not been systematically studied so far, and in combination with the existing objects they provide an illustrative view on our research field, namely missionary collections as representations of cultural and religious contact. In the spelling of Australian terms we have followed the publications of Worms as well as his correspondence with Antweiler. [8]

Biographical Notes

Ernest Ailred Worms (sometimes spelled Ernst Alfred Worms) was born in Bochum (Germany) on August 27, 1891 (Antweiler 1963, 287; McGregor 2017, 329–30). He was the son of Ernst Otto Worms, a Protestant railway worker, and Auguste Helene Worms (born Wieners), a Catholic. While little is known about his childhood, we do know that he attended a Catholic school in Bochum together with his two brothers Adolf (1889–1955) and Paul (1893–1966); and that one of his sisters became a Clementine nun. Having finished his school education, he completed a vocational education as an accountant (Ganter, n.d.). [9]

In 1912, he entered the order of the Pallottines in Limburg an der Lahn, Germany, and studied philosophy and theology (McGregor 2017, 329–30; Ganter 2019). Ganter mentions that he joined the Pallottines only against the explicit wish of his (Protestant) father (Ganter, n.d.). His studies (1912–1920) were interrupted by the First World War, when Worms was drawn into the army in 1914/1915 and heavily wounded during his military service (Antweiler 1963, 287; McGregor 2017, 329–30). After the war, he studied with Hermann Nekes, who was also a Pallottine father, former Professor at the Orientalist Seminary in Berlin and then Professor of Philosophy, Comparative Religion and Missiology in Limburg, until 1920 (Antweiler 1963, 287; Ganter, n.d.). [10]

Hermann Nekes would become an important figure in Worms’ life and research. Born in Essen in 1875, he was ordained as a Pallottine priest in 1899 and received a Doctor of Theology in 1900. He became a missionary in the city of Jaunde (Cameroon). Having returned to Germany in 1909, he taught in the Seminary of Oriental Languages in Berlin and later in the Academy of the Pallottine Province of Limburg, where Worms was one of his students. He travelled to Australia as a missionary in 1935 (McGregor 2007, 100). [11]

In 1920, Worms was ordained as a priest of the Pallottines and called to the Easter European Pallottine jurisdiction, serving in Rössel in East Prussia (McGregor 2017, 329–30). He worked [12]

in this position until 1930 (Antweiler 1963, 287). A bit of this time was also spent near Königsberg, where he got to know the Catholic initiative “Neudeutschland” (Youth Federation New Germany) (Ganter 2017, 358).

In 1930, the Pallottines in Limburg sent Worms to Australia (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 129), where he was stationed in Broome (Ganter, n.d.) in the Kimberley. He arrived there on December 17th, 1930 and commenced his post as a parish priest and missionary in Broome, but also immersed himself in studies of language and culture, doing fieldwork among the Yawuru (Jaueru, Yaoro) already in 1931. Nekes, who had been his teacher in Limburg from 1918 to 1920, came to Australia in 1935, and Worms became his assistant for several expeditions into the outback (Antweiler 1963, 287; McGregor 2017, 329–30). Worms conducted these anthropological and linguistic studies because he considered them necessary for his job as a missionary (Antweiler 1963, 287). From 1935 to 1938 Nekes and Worms worked together in the Kimberley, researching local languages and cultures (McGregor 2007, 100).

Otto Raible, who would become bishop in 1935, had asked Worms to engage in mission among the indigenous peoples, and this is why, on his first expedition in 1931, Worms went from Beagle Bay to a site of the Galalang dreaming and selected Balgo as a new mission site (Ganter, n.d.). The Pallottines had been active in the northwest of Australia since the first decade of the twentieth century, working among the Bad (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 134). When Raible became the first Pallottine bishop in Australia in 1935, he also received ecclesiastic administrative rights in the Kimberley vicariate. As such, Raible was competing with Spanish Benedictines (based in New Norcia) and with the secular state and its claims to gain control. In the process of doing so, he called Hermann Nekes to train public servants in linguistic matters; and he founded the college in Kew (Melbourne) for theological training (Ganter 2017, 358).²

A riding accident in 1937 that forced him to wear a corset ended his active fieldwork period (until the 1950s) (Ganter, n.d.). In early 1938, Worms became the rector of the Pallottine College in Kew, a suburb of Melbourne (Victoria), where his job was to train Australian recruits for the Pallottine order. Nekes, who stayed in Kew for most of the time, too, continued to work with him during this time (McGregor 2017, 330–31; Antweiler 1963, 287). Worms stayed in Kew for ten years. While the Second World War was raging in many regions of the world, Worms established an international reputation, not just in missiology, but also in linguistics and anthropology (Ganter, n.d.). From 1940 to 1945, Worms was under house arrest in Kew, but continued to correspond with scholars around the world. In 1947, he travelled to Germany and gave lectures in several cities (Ganter 2019).

In 1948, Worms returned to the Kimberly (Broome) and took up his research about the languages and cultures of the Aborigines (Antweiler 1963, 287; McGregor 2017, 330–31). He also continued his mission work at Lombadina and Broome during this time and ‘discovered’ rock art sites, including such a site at the Yule River south of Port Hedland (Ganter, n.d.).

Almost ten years later, in 1957, Worms became the first rector of a new Pallottine college in Manly (Sydney) in New South Wales. He would remain on this post until his death in 1963. In the same year (1957), he travelled to Germany, visiting Münster and Würzburg, and “donated”³ “several valuable artefacts” to the Institute for the Study of Religion at the

2 For a more general introduction to the history of Christian missions in Australia, see Harris (1990) and Ganter (2018).

3 That this was a donation is recorded by Antweiler in the obituary for Worms. The correspondence between Worms and Antweiler, however, shows that Antweiler offered a payment of 200 Deutsche Mark for the

Catholic Faculty of Münster University (Ganter, n.d.). His academic reputation had grown to the extent that he was “appointed a member of the linguistic panel of the interim council for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies” in 1961 (now the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, AIATSIS) (McGregor 2017, 330–31). In 1960, he received funding by the Wenner-Gren Foundation (New York, USA) and embarked on a nine-month expedition to Central, North, and Western Australia, visiting cave paintings and rock carvings (Antweiler 1963, 287). In 1961, he spoke at a conference that was preparing the establishment of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies that was to be founded in 1964 (Ganter 2019). He died of cancer in Saint Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, on August, 13, 1963 at the age of 72 (McGregor 2017, 330–31; Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 129).

Worms’ Academic Background and Research in Australia

Worms was trained in theology and philosophy and much influenced by the academic traditions of his time, specifically by Rudolf Virchow’s idea that missionaries should make themselves acquainted with the indigenous cultures (Ganter 2017, 359). He spoke German, which was his mother tongue, and also English, French, and Latin, but none of the indigenous languages in Australia. When he arrived there in 1930, he began studying the Yawuru language with the help of Nekes, who was still in Limburg at the time (2017, 359). Nekes was also an avid reader of Wilhelm Schmidt’s work. [18]

Schmidt, a member of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and founder of the journal *Anthropos*, was a widely known anthropologist and founder of the Missionary Ethnological Museum of the Vatican in Rome. Schmidt had published his twelve-volume monograph *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee (The Origin of the Idea of God)* from 1912 to 1955 and proposed that the first primitive religions were monotheistic and that the pygmy races were the “Urvolk.” He had arrived at this thesis by studying languages, assuming that languages were mirroring cultural and historical transformations (2017, 360). Worms, in turn, subscribed to this kind of German ethnology because it was anti-evolutionist and thus fit the Christian cosmogony. Worms was clearly against evolutionist approaches in anthropology (e.g. Frazer, Tylor, Spencer) (2017, 362). Nekes, from whom Worms had learned much of what he knew in linguistics and anthropology, became his “lifelong friend and mentor” and arrived in Australia in 1935 (McGregor 2017, 331). [19]

Another important influence on Worms’ thinking is the so-called Kulturkreislehre (theory of “culture circles”). Worms does not mention this approach explicitly, according to McGregor (2017, 344–45), but it was a widespread theory among late nineteenth-century German anthropologists, and propagated also by Schmidt (2017, 344–45). This approach was based on the idea that cultural forms develop in a regional center and spread out via diffusion (2017, 345). [20]

Besides by Nekes and Schmidt, Worms’ perspective on the Australian indigenous societies was also shaped by Helmut Petri (1907–1986), professor of anthropology at Cologne University. Petri was the leader of an expedition into the Kimberley in 1938/39 and met Worms before and after this expedition (McGregor 2017, 331). Petri was also the one who finished [21]

objects (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, 7 February 1957, ULB Münster 008,079), which he sent to Worms via his brother (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, 1 June 1957, ULB Münster, 009,176). Whether Worms carried the objects (stone tools, tjuringa and drawings) with him and personally handed them over to Antweiler or whether he sent the objects to Münster later cannot be determined anymore.

and edited (some say co-authored, e.g., 2017, 340) Worms' *Die Religionen der Südsee und Australiens* for the Kohlhammer series *Die Religionen der Menschheit* (published in 1968). In this work, which can be considered as Worms' opus magnum, he finds a more nuanced position towards Schmidt's "Urmonotheismus," arguing that there is not enough evidence for a monotheistic belief among the Aboriginal mainland societies (2017, 346):

In discussing the spirit beings, we have avoided the term 'God' without doubting in the least that higher beings existed among the Australians. The available material and our observations of many years, as well as those of Stanner and T. G. H. Strehlow, do not offer sufficient reasons to assume a belief in a God, let alone a High God among them. We could not find a single spiritual being in Australia to whom an unlimited and undivided power over all spiritual and physical conditions could be attributed. The term 'God', moreover, is so fully claimed and filled to the brim by the Old World tradition that we dare not attempt to force into it the Australian conception of higher beings as well. Australians may well know of uncreated and independent higher beings to whom they pay a ritual respect but not a latreutic reverence. The title of 'creator' can only be given to them with considerable restrictions, since they do not actually create new things, but rather continue to shape an already existing world and share this activity with other spiritual beings.⁴

[22]

Within this framework, and based on his own ethnographic work, Worms' contribution to ethnography and linguistics can be described as comprising four aspects, according to Ganter's biographical work on Worms: First, he affirmed the "basic unity of Aboriginal languages," second, he assumed there was an early "Ur-population," in which he assumed, third, "traces of monotheism." Fourth, all his research was founded on the "centrality of language in expressing and communicating culture" (Ganter 2017, 361). The missiological aspect of his work can be found in the fact that his ethnographic work was "driven by the desire to comprehend Aboriginal religion in terms that were decipherable to Christian thought," e.g., when he assumed that, in the past, people in the Kimberley believed in an "all-father, who was public knowledge and could be freely referred to" (2017, 362).

[23]

It has been noted that his perspective on the indigenous peoples in Australia sometimes tended to be rather humanistic. For instance, he tried to "resist cultural stereotypes about Aboriginal people and [emphasized] their equal intelligence" (2017, 372). Unlike other missionaries, he worked in many different places. This was an advantage for his comparative work, but, on the other hand, he never learned to speak one of the Aboriginal languages prop-

[24]

4 "Bei Besprechung der Geistwesen haben wir, ohne im Geringsten die Existenz höherer Wesen bei den Australiern anzuzweifeln, die Bezeichnung 'Gott' vermieden. Das vorhandene Material und unsere langjährigen Beobachtungen sowie diejenigen Stanners und T. G. H. Strehlows bieten keinen genügenden Anhalt, bei ihnen einen Glauben an einen Gott oder gar Hochgott anzunehmen. Wir konnten kein einziges Geistwesen in Australien feststellen, dem eine unbeschränkte und ungeteilte Macht über alle geistigen und physischen Gegebenheiten zugesprochen werden könnte. Der Begriff 'Gott' ist zudem durch die Tradition der alten Welt so randvoll gefüllt und so voll beansprucht, dass wir nicht den Versuch wagen, in ihn auch noch die australische Auffassung von höheren Wesen hineinzuzwingen. Die Australier kennen wohl unerschaffene und unabhängige höhere Wesen, denen sie eine rituelle Achtung, aber keine latreutische Verehrung zollen. Der Titel 'Schöpferwesen' kommt ihnen nur mit wesentlicher Einschränkung zu, da sie nicht im eigentlichen Sinne neuschaffen, sondern eine schon bestehende Welt weitergestalten und diese Tätigkeit mit anderen Geistwesen teilen" (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 232). In this article, all translations from German to English are by the authors.

erly (McGregor 2017, 331). Considering ethnographic methodology, one must recognize that he seems to have never put much thought into methods (2017, 334).

Existing research about Worms and his work in Australia (mostly done by Regina Ganter and William McGregor, both of whom we quote extensively in this paper) mostly stresses his linguistic and ethnographic work and does not pay too much attention to the fact that Worms was also quite interested in the material culture of the Aboriginal societies. Indeed, most of Worms' published works are within the research area of linguistics (McGregor 2007, 2017, 336–37); only some of his papers refer to art or material culture, and the existing collections are vivid examples of his interest in material culture. His *Die Religionen der Südsee und Australiens* also contains long passages about ritual objects and indigenous art in Australia. [25]

Still, McGregor's assessment of Worm's academic output is right when he notes that Worms mostly focused on texts and (mythic) stories and analyzed them for evidence of religious beliefs; a tendency he shared with much of late nineteenth-century ethnography in Germany (McGregor 2017, 338). His most productive period of writing was in the late 1930s and early 1940s, when he published in the Vatican ethnological series *Annali Lateranensi* and in one of the leading ethnographic journals of the time, *Anthropos*. With prior consent and approval of the Pallottine Provincial, he published 16 academic journal articles and co-authored two books (Ganter, n.d.). All in all, while he was an ethnographic amateur, his works are well known among Australianists today, although often criticized for being inaccurate or speculative (McGregor 2017, 330–31). [26]

A central piece of his linguistic work is the article on "Australian Mythological Terms," published in 1957 in *Anthropos* (Worms 1957). In November of 1957, Worms asked Antweiler if he would be willing to write a review about this article for the *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*.⁵ Antweiler's subsequent piece on Worms' paper was published in 1959. The declared goal of Worms' rather brief research article (some 35 pages) was to "open the way for a deeper understanding of the native belief in a widely extended sphere of ghostly activity" (Worms 1957, 732) based on the analysis of mythological terms in several Aboriginal languages. Another paper about the "Australian notion of the soul" ("Der Australische Seelenbegriff") appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* in 1959. In this article, he presents his linguistic analysis of indigenous stories about 'the soul.' His work is based on his own fieldwork in the Kimberley and that of "other anthropologists," focusing on indigenous religious-mythical terms and their geographic occurrences. His basic argument is that of a "religious, linguistic, and ethnic unity of Australia" (Worms 1959, 296). [27]

These are just two examples from Worms' work that should illustrate the direction of his linguistic research. His opus magnum *Australian Languages*, published posthumously with Nekes but printed only in 2006 (edited by McGregor) is a summary of this linguistic work (McGregor 2007, 99–114). For our present article, we are much more interested in Worms' understanding of material culture and how this interest related to a small collection of Australian artifacts in Antweiler's institute at Münster University. While most of Worms' Nachlass, including letters, photographs and artifacts, is archived in the Pallottine archives in Limburg and Rossmoyne (Perth) (Ganter 2017, 373), a small but significant collection made it to Münster and is kept there to this day, awaiting further research. [28]

5 Worms: Letter to Antweiler, 6 November 1957, ULB Münster, 009,179.

The Worms Collection at Münster University

We do not know how and when Antweiler and Worms first got in touch. It is possible that Worms' brother, Adolf Worms, who lived in Münster, was involved in bringing them together. In any case, the earliest document available to us in the archives of Münster University is a letter from Worms, dated January 21, 1957, accompanied by a stone Tjurunga "the size of a plate." Sent from Melbourne, where Worms was rector of the Pallottine College in Kew at the time (and shortly before transferring to Manly), the letter explains that this Tjurunga was "rare and difficult to obtain," and given as a gift from the Aranda to their neighbors in the Western Desert. Worms sold it to Antweiler for 20 Deutsche Mark (approximately 50 EUR today).⁶ In the same year, Worms travelled to Germany and visited Münster. It is very likely that Antweiler met Worms, but there is no account of such a meeting in the Münster archives. [29]

They exchanged letters over next months and years, usually regarding Australian objects and their religious or cultural meanings. Sometimes Antweiler would ask for specific objects, sometimes Worms would offer things that he assumed would fit Antweiler's collection. They also corresponded about their scholarly papers and projects. In 1959 Antweiler published a very positive review about Worm's "Australian Mythological Terms" in the *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* (Antweiler 1959). In the fall of 1962, Antweiler made plans to invite Worms to Münster for a lecture series on the religion and culture of the Australian indigenous peoples. Worms had acquired funding for this from the German Research Foundation (DFG).⁷ Worms's illness, however, made this impossible (Antweiler 1963, 288). When Worms died in 1963, he and Antweiler had been in contact for (probably) less than a decade. Still, their relation, in the opinion of Antweiler, had been very influential for the collection at Münster University; Antweiler even planned an exhibition of Worms' pieces in honor of his memory (Antweiler 1963, 288). [30]

Australian Objects in the Collection

The group of ethnographic objects acquired by Antweiler from Worms may be regarded as a separate part within the collection of the Institute for the Study of Religion due to their origin and the circumstances of their acquisition. Based on the correspondence between Antweiler and Worms, about 85 objects from the collection as well as some stamps (that will not be discussed here) can be identified as belonging to the Worms collection. [31]

Our study does not attempt an ethnological analysis of the objects. It rather explores how Worms and Antweiler classified and interpreted the objects. This exploration is based on the correspondence with Antweiler as well as Worms' overview of the religions of Australia, which was published in German (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968). Besides information about the provenance of the objects, this approach will also refer to more general publications by Worms where he discusses the use and cultural importance of certain objects. By doing so, we seek to discuss the relevance of the objects within the collection and their meaning for the study of religions. [32]

According to the existing correspondence between Antweiler and Worms, the objects were transferred to Münster in the years 1957 and 1958. Antweiler and Worms stayed in close [33]

6 Worms: Letter to Antweiler, 21 January 1957, ULB Münster, 009,178.

7 Worms: Letter to Antweiler, 2 January 1963, ULB Münster, 009,192, 1.

contact during the following years, exchanging numerous letters, but no further Australian objects seem to have been included into the collection.

The following table (table 1) represents the contents of the collection as reconstructed from the correspondence.⁸ We were not able to trace some of the objects and it has also not been possible to safely assign all the existing objects to an entry in the inventory list. [34]

Table 1 Inventory of the collection.

Object	Designation according to Worms (German)	Designation according to the Inventory (German)	Inv.-No.
Conical stone	Phallus-Stein	Phallus-Stein, Australien	12
Clapstick	eingravierte Holzstäbe; Klabgstäbe; Xylophone	Klangholz, Australien	13
Clapstick		Klangholz, Australien	14
Spear point	Speerspitzen	Speerspitze, Australien	15
Spear point		Speerspitze, Australien	16
lancet-shaped mother-of-pearl plates	mythologische Perlmutter-blätter; lanzettförmige Perl-mutterstücke	Lanzette, Perlmutter, Australien	17
lancet-shaped mother-of-pearl plates		Lanzette, Perlmutter, Australien	18
Stone tools (12)	Klein-Steinwerkzeuge	Steine, Australien [partly lost]	18,1–6
Headdress	Kopfschmuck	Schleier	19
Stone tools (50)	50 Steinwerkzeuge	Sammlung von Steinwerkzeugen [partly lost]	20
Thread cross	Fadenkreuz	Fadenkreuz vom Grabkult der Australschwarzen	23
Thread cross		[not inventoried/lost]	
Tjuringa (stone)	tellergrosses Stein-Tjuringa	[not inventoried/lost]	
Tjuringa (wood)	großes Tjuringa (90 cm)	[not inventoried/lost]	
Tjuringa (wood)	zwei kleinere Tjuringa	[later inventoried]	14,2?
Tjuringa (wood)		[later inventoried]	14,3?
Lara (wood)	eingraviertes Holz, Tjuringa ähnlich	[later inventoried]	14,1?
Tjuringa (wood) [?]	Tjuringa-Schwirrholtz [Antweiler] [?]	[not inventoried/lost] [?]	

⁸ When this article was written, the collection was in a state of relative disorder. Research on the Worms collection therefore began with the attempt to assign each object to the respective entry in the register set up by Antweiler. This process was impeded by the fact that most of the objects do not bear accession numbers and that some objects remained untraceable.

Object	Designation according to Worms (German)	Designation according to the Inventory (German)	Inv.-No.
Stone axe	Steinbeil, gehämmert und geschliffen	[not inventoried/lost]	
Stone knife	Steinmesser für Initiationszeremonien	[not inventoried/lost]	
Pastel drawings (5)	5 Pastellzeichnungen eines australischen Eingeborenen	[not inventoried/lost]	

The objects were sent from Australia to Münster by post in several parcels over the course of one year; the first objects were supposedly given to Antweiler by Worms personally during a stay in Münster. Worms announced the posting of these objects in several letters in 1957 and 1958 and added detailed descriptions of some of the contents of each parcel. Antweiler usually confirmed the receipt of the objects. These letters from Worms to Antweiler are almost completely preserved and are therefore an important source for the present study. The letters Antweiler wrote to Worms in return have, to the best of the authors' knowledge, not survived. Worms stresses several times that the objects come from his own collection, which he kept in Melbourne, and that he gave those objects to Antweiler that he had culled from his collection in the course of its reorganization.⁹ The objects, according to Worms, represented the Australian religions of pre-colonial times but were almost all made in the twentieth century. A number of objects are everyday implements without an immediate religious context and were selected to demonstrate a religious ("magical") penetration of daily life that was associated particularly with so-called "primitive" cultures until recently.¹⁰

[35]

The first objects were probably brought to Münster in February 1957. These objects are documented by a receipt. In it, it is stated that the Institute for the Study of Religion at the University of Münster received from Ernest Worms twelve stone tools, a hammered and sharpened stone axe, a stone knife for initiation ceremonies, a Tjuringa, and five pastel drawings of an Australian native with a total value of 200,00 Deutsche Mark.¹¹ Precise information about the objects and their respective value is not given. Since this document was issued in Münster, it can be surmised that Worms or his brother, who lived in Münster, delivered the pieces personally during a visit. The address given is that of his older brother Adolf Worms in Münster. This sequence of events is corroborated by a letter from Worms; in it, he reports about his travel back to Australia in April 1957 and expresses his thanks for the 200,00 Deutsche Mark which Antweiler had left with Adolf Worms.¹² In October of the same year, Worms sent a postal item to Münster; it contained a thread cross and a few stamps with religious motifs.¹³

[36]

9 "Bei Neuordnung meiner Sammlung in Melbourne sortierte ich etliche ethnologische Stücke aus, die ich heute in drei [handschriftlich korrigiert in "4"] kleinen Päckchen Ihnen zusandte" (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, 15 January 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180).

10 The connection between religion and everyday materiality is emphasised by Antweiler in his study of the collection of the Institute for the Study of Religion: "Religion, besonders als Frömmigkeit, umfasst Hingabe und Abstand, Vertrauen und Erschrecken, Geborgenheit und Verlorenheit, Macht und Ohnmacht, Liebliches und Furchtbares, Verworfenheit und Erlösung. Alles das verschließt der Mensch nicht in sich, sondern gibt es kund durch Kleidung, Schmuck, Geräte und Gebäude" (Antweiler 1965, 41).

11 "12 australische Klein-Steinwerkzeuge, 1 austral. Steinbeil, gehämmert & geschliffen, 1 austral. Steinmesser f. Initiationszeremonien, 1 austral. Tjuringa-Schwirrholtz sowie 5 Original Pastellzeichnungen eines austr. Eingeb." (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, 7 February 1957, ULB Münster 008,079).

12 Worms: Letter to Antweiler, 1 June 1957, ULB Münster, 009,176.

13 Worms: Letter to Antweiler, 6 November 1957, ULB Münster, 009,179.



Figure 1 Conical Stone, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 12, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021¹⁶

On January 15, 1958, Worms wrote to Antweiler again and informed him about the shipping of additional objects for the collection in Münster, among them wooden clapsticks, a number of stone tools and spear points, a headdress of females of the Njol Njol, a “Phallus Stein” (phallic stone), “mythologische Perlmutterblätter” (mythological sheets of mother-of-pearl) and another thread cross as “Zugabe” (bonus).¹⁴ These objects were sent in several packets; according to Worms they had not been easy to find due to the rapid intrusion of western culture, which he describes as “verflachend” (“causing [the indigenous culture] to become more shallow”).¹⁵

Conical Stone (Inv. No. 12)

One of the extraordinary pieces in the collection of the Institute for the Study of Religion is a conical stone (Inv. No. 12) sent to Münster by Worms as part of a group of objects in January 1958 (figure 1). In his work about the religions of Australia (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968), Worms emphasizes the rarity of these stones he interprets as “Steinphalli” (phallic stones):

Phallic stones are extremely rare in Australia. Altogether about 14 pieces are known today. Among them are four which were given to us in 1933 by the Njol Njol of Dampier land. These are only marginally reworked iron stone concretions which, judging from the small shells attached, must have been found in the gravel

14 The group accordingly consists of “zwei eingravierte[n] Holzstaebe[n]” (first package), “50 Steinwerkzeuge[n]” (second package), “Zwei Speerspitzen, zwei mytholog. Perlmutterblaetter” (third package), “Kopfschmuck der Frauen der Njol Njol” (fourth package) as well as “Conical Stone, ein Phallus Stein” (fifth package). He adds: “Nun lege ich Ihrem Wunsche entspr. eine tentative Rechnung bei, in der Annahme, dass sie von der Universitaet beglichen wird” (As desired, I include a tentative invoice, supposing that it will be met by the university) (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180).

15 “Alle Dinge, die ich hier erwaehte nicht so leicht mehr zu haben sein, da die weisse ‘Kultur’ rasch und verflachend eindringt” (All things I have mentioned will not be easily available since the white “culture” intrudes quickly and makes [the indigenous culture] shallow) (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180).

16 Some of the objects examined in this article are subject to secrecy in their societies of origin and are considered secret/sacred. This applies in particular to the turingas, which, according to tradition, may not be viewed by women and/or outsiders. On the other hand, social-scientific research is increasingly required to ensure gender-neutral access (see Raabe 2017, 143–45). Faced with this conflict of accessibility and restrictions, the authors have chosen to depict the objects discussed here through simplified line drawings that are not equivalent to original photographs.

[37]

[38]

at the sea shore. [...] They were taken out of hiding before the rainy season to be used in propagation festivals and were passed around by men involved in the preparation of initiation rites. Already in 1899 Mjöberg received four similar pieces from the northern neighbors of the Njol Njol, the Njingina on the lower Fitzroy river (Kimberley).¹⁷

In his correspondence with Antweiler, Worms refers to the object as a “Conical Stone, a Phallus Stone” and reports that he received this stone in 1944 during an expedition along the upper Darling River south of the town Bourke (New South Wales). The Bakandji who lived there and whose ancestors were said to have used the stone, were “verschwunden und detribalisiert” (“had disappeared and were de-tribalized”) and no reports or traditions regarding the use of the stone were available. Yet, “nach Ansicht bester Ethnologen” (“according to the foremost ethnologists”), the stone was a phallic object and was used for the fertility celebrations common in Australia. He explicitly directs Antweiler’s attention to the concave area at the flat end of the object without explaining why this is important to him.¹⁸ In the invoice, Worms charges 10,00 Deutsche Mark for the stone.¹⁹ [39]

Tjuringa

“Tjuringa” or “Tjurunga” is the term used for flat wooden or lithic objects of the Aranda and neighboring tribes. They are often oblong and bear incised geometrical motifs that are believed to have emerged without any outer influence; they are related to the ancestors and their migration routes but can only be read by the initiated members of the tribe (Kohl 2003, 179). Other authors extend the use of the term to include different objects assigned to a sacral context, such as ritual equipment, thread crosses or mounds, but also body paintings and ritual jewelry (Strehlow 1947, 84–86). Worms, in the respective chapter of his overview of the Australian religions (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 141–59), uses the German terms “Schwirrholz” and “Seelenholz” while at the same time indicating that there is a more general meaning of the word. [40]

The sacred whirr and soul rods of Australia are called by the general Aranda word tjurunga after B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen and C. Strehlow though for both instruments one or more synonymous special terms are known in different regions. [...] Many ethnologists narrow down the term tjurunga to whirr and soul rods while T. G. H. Strehlow explicitly states that the word at least for the Aranda in CA bears a [41]

17 “Steinphalli sind in Australien außerordentlich selten. Im Ganzen sind heute vielleicht 14 Stücke bekannt geworden. Zu diesen zählen vier Steinphalli, die uns im Jahre 1933 von den Njol Njol des Dampier-Landes überreicht wurden. Es sind nur leicht überarbeitete Eisensteinkonkretionen, die, nach angewachsenen Müschelchen zu schließen, im Geröll des Meeresstrandes gefunden worden waren. [...] Sie wurden beim Herannahen der Regenzeit für Vermehrungsfeiern aus dem Versteck geholt und bei Initiationsvorbereitungen von den bei dieser Weihe aktiven Männern herungereicht. Schon um 1899 erhielt Mjöberg von den östlichen Nachbarn der Njol Njol, den Njingina des Unterlaufes des Fitzroy-Flusses (Kimberley), vier ähnliche Stücke” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 202).

18 “Im Jahre 1944 erhielt ich diesen eigenartigen Stein bei einer Expedition am oberen Darling Fluss, West-New South Wales, ungefähr 30 km südlich von der kleinen Stadt Bourke. Die dort lebenden Bakandji sind fast ganz verschwunden und detribalisiert. Dieser Stein stammt aber wohl von viel früheren Generationen. Es liegt kein mündlicher Bericht oder schriftliche Nachricht früherer Forscher vor über den Gebrauch dieses Steines, doch ist er nach Ansicht bester Ethnologen in Australien ein Phallus, der für die in Australien allgemein geübten Fruchtbarkeitsfeiern eine große Rolle spielt. Beachten Sie bitte die konkave Fläche am flachen Ende” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180).

19 Worms: Letter to the University of Münster, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143, Nr. 34,48.

much wider meaning. [...] They rank other ritual objects and religious institutes such as stone tjurunga, thread crosses, sacred posts and earth hills, body paintings and ceremonial ornaments as equal to these two staffs. Accordingly, we have included in our discussion—since it is meant to cover Australia in its entirety—the sacred wooden figures, crystals and linga, sacred musical instruments as well as esoteric cave paintings, bark images, rock engravings as well as esoteric places, weapons, and fruit, and have thus dealt with the majority of religious phenomena. Despite this extension we do not hesitate to use the term tjurunga first and foremost for these two wooden boards. All implements and institutes listed here are in the perception of the natives tjuruya, i. e. means installed by a supernatural being which serve the purpose of its realization and to radiate its life-raising powers. Tjurunga is a theological word that does not denote a purpose but rather origin and character.²⁰

The Tjuringa, according to Worms, is not primarily an object to commemorate the spirit but rather serves to envision and locate it (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 141). It makes this spirit and thus the Australian religion visible; therefore, it is no surprise that this type of object in particular is found in numerous collections as a typical representative of Australian religion. In his descriptions, Worms refers to the Tjuringa in the context of the Dreaming and the journey of the soul: [42]

Sometimes these dream journeys are promoted through the use of powerful ritual implements or Tjuringas, the seats of hero spirits on earth. [...] Yaoro men, in my presence, grabbed a rope covered in dawn which connected the tips of the Tjuringa in front the bark figure of the mighty Djanba while kneeling and with heads turned down. Thus, they believed, it was possible to cause a bilocation and to visit remote places with their subtle self.²¹ [43]

Worms further describes the importance of the Tjuringa as a kind of medium in the context of mythic transmission: [44]

Thus, the tjurunga is the unwritten book of history and religion of Australia. How [45]

20 “Die heiligen Schwirr- und Seelenhölzer Australiens werden wohl seit B. Spencer und F. J. Gillen sowie seit C. Strehlow mit dem allgemeinen Arandawort tjurunga bezeichnet, obwohl für beide Geräte in den verschiedenen Gegenden eine oder mehrere synonyme Sonderbezeichnungen zu finden sind. [...] Viele Ethnologen pflegen den Begriff tjurunga auf Schwirr- und Seelenhölzer einzuengen, während T. G. H. Strehlow nachdrücklich darauf hinweist, dass dieses Wort wenigstens bei den Aranda in ZA einen viel weiteren Sinn hat. [...] Diese stellen nämlich jenen beiden Hölzern noch andere Ritualgeräte und religiöse Einrichtungen wie Steintjurunga, Fadenkreuze, heilige Pfosten und Erdhügel, Körperbemalungen und Zeremonialschmuck gleichwertig zur Seite. Dementsprechend haben wir in unsere ganz Australien umfassenden Abhandlung auch noch die heiligen Holzfiguren, Kristalle und Linga, die heiligen Musikinstrumente sowie die esoterischen Höhlengemälde, Rindenbilder, Felsgravierungen und esoterischen Plätze, Waffen und Früchte einbezogen und damit den Großteil der religiösen Phänome erfasst. Trotz dieser Erweiterung zögern wir nicht, in erster Linie den beiden Ritualbrettern den Namen tjurunga zu überlassen. Alle hier aufzuzählenden Geräte und Institutionen sind in den gläubigen Augen der Eingeborenen tjuruya, d. h. Einrichtungen, die ein außernatürliches Wesen mit der Bestimmung eingesetzt hat, seiner eigenen Vergegenwärtigung und der Ausstrahlung seiner lebenerweckenden Kräfte zu dienen. Tjurunga ist ein ‘theologisches’ Wort, das nicht Zweck, sondern Ursprung und Wesen hervorhebt” (Nevermann, Worms and Petri 1968, 140).

21 “Zuweilen werden diese Traumreisen mit Hilfe machtschwangerer Ritualgeräte oder Tjuringa, dem irdischen Sitz der Heroengeister, geflissentlich gefördert. [...] Yaoro-Männer ergriffen in meiner Gegenwart vor der Rindenfigur des mächtigen Djanba, in kniender Stellung und mit gesenkten Köpfen, einen mit Federflaum beklebten Strick, der die Spitzen der Tjuringa verband. Auf diese Weise glauben sie, eine Art von Bilokation hervorzurufen und mit ihrem leichtstofflichen Ich weitentfernte Orte zu besuchen” (Worms 1959, 301).

important it is to 'read' it can be derived from the fact that it is not just a long recitation of epic sequences. Similar to the ritual greasing and rubbing of the tjuringa with ochre, to the refreshing of the colored cave paintings of the North and the painstaking reduplication of rock drawings in the Northwest, the repetition of the narratives aims at a metaphysical recall of the primordial hour of creation to secure the extra natural existence of the reciter and his tribe. The tjuringa is for him an almost daily reminder of his mystical agreement with the spirit and of its timeless actions as protector of his physical powers. Like an always accessible medicine it keeps one's own and strange illnesses away and fends off damaging spiritual powers.²²

At the same time, he states that through the intrusion of Western civilization, the actual beliefs had already become somewhat shallow and that his can be observed, for instance, in the changed usage of the Tjuringa: [46]

The rites connected to these pointed instruments aren't merely mechanical acts; they are deeply rooted in the religious notions of the natives. Whenever the old belief in an ancient spiritual union has been destroyed as Australians become estranged from their own culture, the use of the tjuringa is turned into a shallow, mechanical magic, to be given up bit by bit in an adaption to modern legal life.²³ [47]

This also includes the use of the Tjuringa as an expression of wealth or as assets: [48]

In the current situation of contact (of traditional indigenous culture and occidental civilization) the tjuringa gain another meaning. They are consciously compared with the wealth of the white, kept in their banks. In the Kimberley and the western desert, the colored calls his cult objects his 'true things'; he does this to express that they represent his actual property, his wealth that can, however, be given away by means of exchange.²⁴ [49]

Worms gave four or five Tjuringa to the collection of the department of Religious Studies, of which two at present are still part of it.²⁵ Among the missing objects is a stone Tjuringa. [50]

22 "So ist die tjuringa das ungeschriebene Religions- und Geschichtsbuch des Australiers. Die Wichtigkeit seiner 'Lesung' wird dadurch erkenntlich, dass diese nicht einfach in einer Rezitation langer Epenreihen besteht. Ähnlich wie bei dem rituellen Einfetten und Bestreichen der tjuringa mit Ocker, beim Auffrischen der farbigen Höhlengemälde des Nordens und bei dem mühsameren Reduplizieren alter Felszeichnungen im Nordwesten geht es bei den Wiederholungen dieser Erzählungen um einen metaphysischen Aufruf der ersten Schöpferstunde zur außernatürlichen Existenzsicherung des Sängers und seines Stammes. Die tjuringa ist ihm eine fast tägliche Erinnerung an seine geheimnisvolle Einigung mit dem Geist und dessen zeitlosen Handlungen, Beschützer seiner physischen Kräfte. Wie eine stets bereite Medizin wehrt sie eigene und fremde Krankheiten ab und hält sie schädliche geistige Mächte fern" (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 152-53).

23 "Die mit diesen Spitzinstrumenten verknüpften Riten sind keine rein mechanischen Handlungen; sie sind tief in der religiösen Auffassung der Eingeborenen verwurzelt. Wo bei der eigenen Kultur entfremdeten Australiern der alte Glaube an die urzeitliche Geistunion zerstört ist, entwickelt sich der Gebrauch solcher tjuringa zu einer flachen, mechanisch wirkenden Magie, um nach und nach in Anpassung an das moderne Rechtsleben ganz aufgegeben zu werden" (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 149).

24 "In der gegenwärtigen Kontaktsituation (Berührung zwischen traditioneller Eingeborenenkultur und abendländischer Zivilisation) gewinnen die tjuringa noch eine weitere Bedeutung. Sie werden bewusst verglichen mit den in Banken deponierten Vermögenswerten der Weißen. Im Kimberley und in der Westlichen Wüste bezeichnet der Farbige seine Kultobjekte als seine 'wahren Dinge'; er möchte damit zum Ausdruck bringen, dass sie seinen eigentlichen Besitz, seinen Reichtum darstellen, der allerdings auch im Tauschwege abgegeben werden kann" (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 153).

25 In his study of the creator spirit Djamar, Worms describes seven Tjuringas which were given to him: "Seven tjuringa were given to me which are related to great Djamar, the Creator, and his myth. One of them

Stone Tjuringa (missing)

In January 1958, Ernst Worms stayed in Melbourne. He posted several parcels with objects for the collection in Münster, among them several Tjuringa. On January 21, 1958, Worms reports in a letter (mistakenly dated to January 21, 1957) the posting of a “telligroßen Stein-Tjuringa” (plate-sized stone Tjuringa) that originated from Central Australia. Such Tjuringa, he continues, are rare and difficult to come by. The one sent to Münster was said to have been given as a present by the Aranda to a neighboring tribe in the Western Desert.²⁶ Worms quotes the value of the Tjuringa as 20.00 Deutsche Mark and bills another 10.00 Deutsche Mark for postage.²⁷ [51]

Two years later, Worms received another stone Tjuringa. Although this object was not given to Münster, the circumstances in which it came into his possession are also of interest for the assessment of the Tjuringas in this collection and their provenance. In his volume on the religions of Australia he describes its handing over: [52]

In the year 1960 an old Aranda man gave us, some 100 km southeast of Alice Springs, a carefully wrapped, 135 mm long and 60 mm wide tjuringa made of greenish-yellow soapstone that did not bear any engravings. His forefathers had often scraped it with a harder stone and used to scatter the dust to fatten Euros, a breed of kangaroos. That’s why it was called Djuran andera or Eurofat-tjuringa. While scraping some unintelligible verses were sung which ended in a long badidja-baum.²⁸ [53]

Wooden Tjuringas (Inv. No. 14, 1–3)

Among the objects Worms sent to Münster in January 1958 were also three wooden Tjuringa of varying size and another long, Tjuringa-like object he calls ‘Lara.’ The largest of these objects had a length of about 90 cm and was given to Worms by members of the Yaoro tribe from the region of Broome. They did not produce the object themselves but received it as a gift from another tribal group. According to Worms, these objects were frequently handed down from one people to the next and were thus transported from the interior regions to the coastal region of Kimberley. Via the same routes, the myths and religious ideas were spread that were still known to some of the elders (Worms calls them “older Christian men”), who [54]

(Tjuringa 1) was delivered to me before I knew about the existence of the myth, and the other six a year later, after it had been explained to me. All seven boards are called galaguru or galiguru by those who are acquainted with the secret myth. But the tjuringa 2–7 have additional names, such as djidi, nabara and nalja, which are known only to the old and fully initiated men” (Worms 1950, 653). Whether one of these objects was given to the collection in Münster is impossible to ascertain from the available correspondence.

26 “Es ist ein tellergrosses Stein-Tjuringa, das von Central Australien stammt + ebenfalls selten + schwierig zu erhalten ist. Wiederum ist es im Geschenkverkehr von den Aranda an die Nachbarstämme der Western Desert, wo wir unsere Mission haben, weitergegeben” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 21, 1957, ULB Münster, 009,178).

27 “Meine Portoauslagen waren fast DM 10/-. Ich werte es mit DM 20/- für die Universität” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 21, 1957, ULB Münster, 009,178).

28 “Im Jahre 1960 überreichte uns ein alter Aranda-Mann, etwa 100 km südöstlich von Alice Springs, eine sorgfältig verpackte, 135 mm lange und 60 mm breite tjuringa aus grünlich-gelbem Speckstein, der jede Eingravierung fehlte. Schon seine Vorväter hatten sie oft mit einem härteren Stein geschabt und den Staub zum Fettmachen der Euro, einer Känguruhart, ausgestreut; deshalb hieß sie Djuran andera oder Eurofett-Tjuringa. Beim Abschaben wurden einige uns unverständliche Verse gesungen, die in ein langgezogenes badidja-baum ausklangen” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 196).

respected them although they no longer believed in them.²⁹ This large Tjuringa cannot be traced in the collection and does not seem to have been inventoried. Besides the size there is only a rough description in the correspondence:

On one side in particular you find the well-known spirals or goraoga – a word that is probably connected to the Central Australian word guran, ‘spirit, mythological inner power, soul’ [...] The Tjuringa is covered with ockre.³⁰ [55]

About two smaller Tjuringa, Worms only reports that he received them from the desert tribe of the Walmadjeri and Gogadja in Southeast Kimberley as an “expression of their particular trust,” and that these were referred to as “galiguru” (spirit entity).³¹ About the so-called Lara, Worms provides just a brief description, too: [56]

It is worn in the hairknot on the back of men’s heads and is not secret or esoteric. The so-called key pattern engraved in it is characteristic of the Garadjari tribe 160 km southwest of Broome where we opened a mission at Lagrange on 1.1.1955.³² [57]

In the collection of the Department of Religious Studies, there are three wooden Tjuringas which are not registered in Antweiler’s original inventory and were only later on added as Inv. nos. 14,1–3 by an unknown person (figures 2, 3 and 4). A safe assignment is impossible, but it is very probable that these are the objects described by Worms. All three are of different size and bear different engraved ornaments: [58]

Table 2 List of Tjuringas in the collection.

Object	Length	Decoration
Inv.-No. 14,1 (Tjuringa)	ca. 30 cm	Spiral pattern
Inv.-No. 14,2 (Tjuringa)	ca. 40 cm	Square spiral pattern
Inv.-No. 14,3 (Lara [?])	ca. 17 cm	Wave pattern

Two of the objects moreover bear an inscription that seems to provide the place of origin, [59]

29 “[Das Tjuringa] wurde mir von den Yaoro, die um Broome, Nord Westaustralien (17 Suedl. Br.) herum wohnen, ueberreicht. Es wurde aber nicht von ihnen hergestellt, sondern es kam als ein verschiedentlich wiederholtes Gegengeschenk von den Voelkern, die westlich von den Aranda wohnen, von Stamm zu St[amm] vom Inneren bis zur Kueste von West Kimberley, am Indischen Ozean. Wie dieses tjuringa, so gelangen auch Mythen, Zeremonien religioese Ideen von dorther staendig zu uns im Nordwesten. Sie sind auch den aelteren christlichen Maennern bekannt und werden no[ch] von ihnen mit mythologischem Respekt betrachtet, obwohl sie daran nicht mehr ‘glauben’” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 20, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,177).

30 “Sie finden besonders auf einer Sei[te] die bekannten Spiralen oder goraoga, ein Wort das wohl mit dem Worte guran, ‘Geist, mythologische Innenkraft, Seele’ Inner Australiens zusammenhaengt. [...] Das Tjuringa ist mit Ocker eingerieb[en]” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 20, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,177).

31 “Zwei kleinere Tjuringa, die ich von dem Wuestenstamm der Walmadjeri und Gogadja in Suedost-Kimberley erhalten habe, zum Ausdruck ihres besonderen Vertrauens [...] Die Eingeborenen nennen diese tjuringa galiguru = gali-guru = ‘Wesen’ - ‘Geist’ oder ‘Geistwesen’” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 20, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,177).

32 “Es wird beim Tanz in dem Haarwust des Hinterkopfes von den Maennern getragen und ist nicht geheim oder esoterisch. Das sog. Key pattern, das in dieses eingraviert ist, ist typisch für den Stamm der Garadjari, 160 km suedwestlich von Broome, wo wir am 1.1.1955 zu Lagrange eine Mission eroeffnet haben“ (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 20, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,177). In his study on the Autralian religions, Worms refers to objects of this type as “Haarstöcke” (hair staff) (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 146) or “Tanzstock” (dance staff) (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 158).

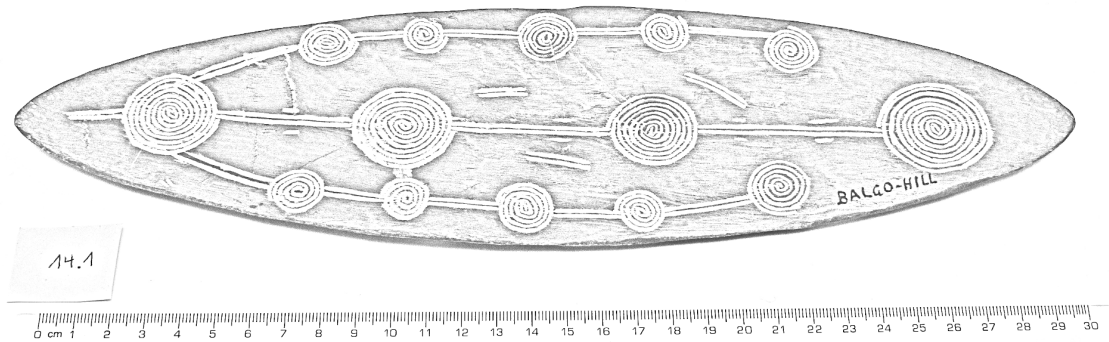


Figure 2 Wooden Tjuringa, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 14,1, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

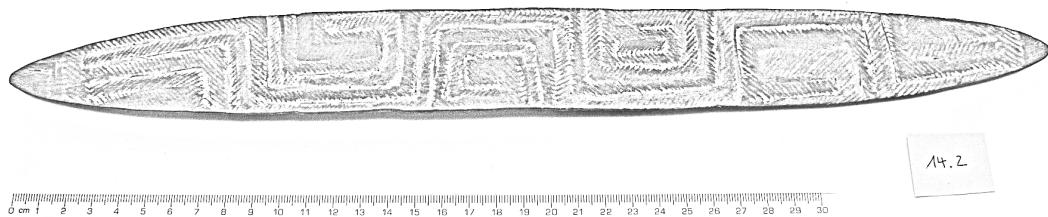


Figure 3 Wooden Tjuringa, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 14,2, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

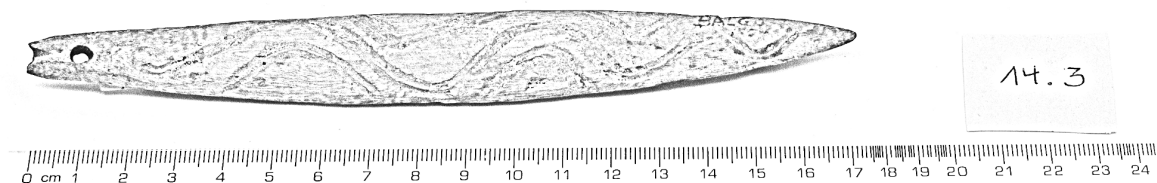


Figure 4 Wooden Tjuringa, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 14,3, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

Balgo-(?) (Inv.-No. 14,3) and Balgo Hill (Inv. No. 14,1) respectively. Balgo Hill (today Wirrimanu) was the site of a mission station of the Pallotines; it was moved here in 1965 after the older site in Balgo was abandoned. Balgo-Hill as place of origin may at first glance suggest that the objects were the ones in the possession of Ernst Worms. This is, however, disproved by the fact that the shifting of the station from Balgo to Wirrimanu (Balgo Hill) only took place after Worms' death. Whether Balgo was also called Balgo Hills remains unclear. Consequently, the assignment of the objects continues to be uncertain; it cannot be ruled out that the inscriptions were added at a later stage.

Worms gave these Tjuringas to the collection in Münster without demanding any payment. [60] He writes to Antweiler that these objects were of foremost ethnological value and that he only wanted to give them to the collection as a donation and for future safekeeping; he merely asks to be reimbursed for the postage of 10.00 Deutsche Mark.³³ At the same time, he reports that he declared the objects for export as “engraved pieces of wood”—which was corrected afterwards to “boards of wood”—and as a present with little monetary value (he mentions a value of two Australian pounds). He further remarks that ethnological objects needed special permission to be exported but that this regulation found little acceptance in the Eastern parts of Australia.³⁴ Shortly after this statement, Worms writes in a similar vein when he informs Antweiler that the Australian press warns against the export of ethnological objects without permission and asks him to take the precaution not to mention his name in connection to the objects that were sent to Münster.³⁵ Antweiler acknowledges the receipt of the Tjuringas on March 14, 1958 and thanks Worms for “enriching the collection with these precious objects” without mentioning the lack of export permissions.³⁶ Instead, he asks why the larger of the Tjuringas does not have a hole to thread a string through, which makes it impossible to swing it around.³⁷ An answer by Worms is not documented in the extant correspondence but a hint may be found in his study of the creator spirit Djamar:

Some of these tjuringa (1, 4, 6, 7) possess bore-holes for a hair-string by which they are whirled causing a dull sound (bibur) which is considered to be the voice of Djamar. In popular parlance they go under the name of ‘bullroarer,’ while the natives call them buliwana. But all tjuringa, whether they are with or without a bore-hole are handled by the aborigines with equal respect and secrecy, equally thought to be the means of an indwelling power or even carriers of the supreme being itself. (Worms 1959, 653) [61]

It is likely that Worms transferred another Tjuringa to the collection at an earlier date but [62]

33 “Diese Dinge, besonders diese Tjuringa sind von einem solchen ethnologischen Wert, dass ich sie Ihnen nur als Geschenk zur Betreuung uebergebe. Nur die Versandkosten bitte ich zu ergaenzen. Sie betragen DM 10.-” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 20, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,177).

34 “Ich deklarierte sie als ‘Engraved piece of wood’ [changed by Worms to ‘Board of wood’] und Gift (donation) mit geringer Wertung [changed by Worms to ‘£2’] des Zolls wegen. An und fuer sich duerfen ethnologische Dinge nicht ohne besondere Erlaubnis aus Australien ausgefuehrt werden. Aber diese Bestimmung wird in den oestlichen Staaten wenig beachtet“ (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 20, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,177).

35 “In einer Zeitungsnotiz wurde kuerzl. vor Aussendung ethnol. Stuecke ohne besondere Erlaubnis gewarnt. Es wurde [sic!] darum in m. Interesse sein, wenn mein Name in Verbindg. mit den Ihnen gesandten Objekten einstweilen nicht betont wird“ (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, February 18, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,182).

36 It may be assumed that the missing export permit was one reason why these objects were (initially?) not added to the collection register or inventoried in any other form.

37 “Weshalb hat das große Tjuringa kein Loch zum einstecken einer Schnur, damit man es schwingen kann?“ (Antweiler: Letter to Worms, March 14, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143 Nr. 34,42).

this was not inventoried. A voucher dated February 7, 1957, lists among others a single “austral. Tjuringa-Schwirrholtz”.³⁸ That this Tjuringa was part of the convolute described earlier is almost impossible because it was sent to Münster one year earlier and is part of an invoice. On the contrary, in his letter dated January 20, 1958, Worms explicitly abstained from charging for the Tjuringas. The invoice was written out for 200.00 Deutsche Mark without giving the value of individual objects; it can therefore not be ascertained which value he ascribed to each of them.

The Tjuringas seem to have been of particular interest to Antweiler because he explicitly asked Worms about them. The letter in question is not preserved, but the respective answer by Worms is: [63]

You mentioned Tjuringas in your letter. I expect my Kimberley collection to be posted in the coming weeks. I will see whether there are pieces in it that are worth being in your collection.³⁹ [64]

Why Antweiler’s interest focused on these objects is unknown. It can be assumed that the Tjuringas in their different shapes, which became desirable collector’s items in the late nineteenth century, were regarded as characteristic for the religiosity of the indigenous peoples of Australia. Their importance is also underlined by the extensive discussion they received in Worms’ overview of the Australian religions (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 140–59). [65]

Clapsticks (Inv. No. 13, 14)

Clapsticks or claves are percussion instruments and are used in pairs, e. g., to accompany religious festivities. In his study of the Australian religions, Worms explains that these usually 20–30 cm long wooden rods are sometimes confused by collectors with the so-called messenger rods (‘Botenhölzer’). The esoteric significance of the clapsticks can be deduced from the engraved spiral or snake patterns. Some clapsticks furthermore bear certain markings. Thus, the objects, according to Worms, serve to visualize the entire spirit entity (‘Geistperson’) (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 182). The collection received two clapsticks (figure 5) from Worms which he called “zwei eingravierte Holzstäbe.”⁴⁰ [66]

They are clapsticks or xylophones. They are used by the men in ritual dances and are made by the members of the Djaro tribe who live in East Kimberley, Western Australia. They are struck against each other and produce a high sound. Please try it. They bear mythological engravings which were known there and far into inner Australia. They are esoteric. They were given to me by the natives in 1938. They were hidden under a rock and were pulled out under it in my presence.⁴¹ [67]

The documented provenance is particularly remarkable for these objects. How and from whom Worms received an object was not always documented. In this case it may be surmised [68]

38 Worms: Letter to Antweiler, February 7, 1957, ULB Münster 008,079.

39 “Sie sprachen in Ihrem Brief von tjuringas. Ich erwarte die Zusendung meiner Kimberley Sammlung in den naechsten Wochen. Ich werde sehen, ob darunter Stuecke sind, die ihrer Sammlung würdig sind” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, November 6, 1957, ULB Münster, 009,179).

40 Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180.

41 “Es sind Klangstaebe oder Xylophone. Sie werden bei rituellen Taenzen benutzt von den Maennern, sind hergestellt von Angehoerigen des Djaro Stammes, der in Ost Kimberles, Westaustralien, wohnt. Sie werden gegen einander geschlagen u. erzeugen einen hohen Klang. Bitte versuchen. Sie tragen die mythologischen Eingravierungen, die weit von dort bis ins Innere Australiens verbreitet sind. Sie sind esoterisch. Sie wurden



Figure 5 Clapsticks, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 13, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

that the claves which were kept in a special place were formerly used ritually. In the works of Worms there is no further information on this particular case or on the way clapsticks were kept in general. He does, however, give some information about the way Tjuringas were kept in his study on Australian religions; these were stored, often in larger numbers, at special sites only visited by initiated members of the tribe; frequently, such sacral objects were kept under a stone (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 151). Worms valued the claves at 20.00 Deutsche Mark.⁴² Antweiler later acknowledges the receipt of “two engraved rods” in a short note.⁴³ On the relevance of ritual sounds or music in Aboriginal religion, Worms remarks:

It would be surprising if the Australians would not also express their deep religious attitudes with instrumental music, dances and songs. The number of instruments, however, is very limited; most widely spread is the bullroarer-tjuringa which is residence and voice of the spirit at the same time. Equivalent is the trumpet or drone horn (a hollow branch), today known to all Australians under the name didjeridu, the drum or tree gong (a hollow piece of tree trunk) and the beatboard.⁴⁴

[69]

Thread Cross

Two thread crosses (called “Fadenkreuze” by Worms) were originally part of the collection; Antweiler received them in the winter of 1957 and in the spring of 1958, respectively. One of these thread crosses is acc. no. 23 in Antweiler’s collection register, the other one is missing

[70]

mir dort im Jahre 1938 von den Eingeborenen geschenkt. Sie waren unter einem Felsen verborgen und wurden in meiner Gegenwart hervorgezogen” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180).

42 Worms: Letter to the University of Münster, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143, Nr. 34,48.

43 “zwei gravierte Stöcke” (Antweiler: Letter to Worms, February 27, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143 Nr. 34,43).

44 “Es wäre verwunderlich, wenn die Australier ihre tiefen religiösen Anschauungen nicht auch durch Instrumentalmusik, durch Tänze und Gesänge kundgeben würden. Die Zahl der Instrumente ist jedoch sehr gering; das am weitesten verbreitete ist die Schwirrholtz-tjuringa, die Wohnung und Stimme des Geistes zugleich ist. Daneben stehen gleichwertig die Trompete oder das Dröhhorn (ein hohler Ast), heute bei allen farbigen Australiern unter der Bezeichnung didjeridu bekannt, die Trommel oder der Baumgong (ein hohles Baumstück) und schließlich das Schlagbrett” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 178).

and was obviously not inventoried. In his publications, Worms discusses the production and usage of such thread crosses in several places:

Hair cut off after death is either woven into a hip girdle or stretched over a small wooden cross (waninga = thread cross). This is thrown into a waterhole and is devoured there by the hidden mythological snake which rules the realm of the dead.⁴⁵ [71]

Thread crosses and their different varieties are true ritual implements with temporary importance. The Australians believe that they represent and contain supernatural beings in a rudimentary visual form.⁴⁶ [72]

At the Aranda the hair treads are placed closer together than in the Northwest and are more carefully executed by glueing on down feathers and attaching hawk and emu feathers at the corners. In Kimberley we see a simple covering with white, blue, red, and green wool threads which can be bought or exchanged. These star-shaped cross frames or wana are carried on short handles either in the hands or between the teeth in sacral dances.⁴⁷ [73]

As some earlier remarks have already indicated, the etherical waya as well as the tjurunga boards are symbolic emblems of the manifestations of spirits. However, nothing is known about a symbolic presentation comparable to the tjurunga. Their use is limited to dances with religious but also profane themes. The careful custody the bullroarers receive over years is lacking. Although it takes a lot of effort to make them for a celebration they are only used once and are then put aside. They are hidden under a pile of leaves near the Djalai place and left there to rot. In most cases today, they are 'disassembled' after their cultic use and their parts, wool and wooden sticks, are kept for the construction of new thread crosses. Their fast destruction is the main reason why the easily perishable waya hardly ever find their way into ethnological collections.⁴⁸ [74]

We can resume as follows: Thread crosses and their different varieties are real [75]

45 "Die nach dem Verscheiden abgeschnittenen Kopphaare werden entweder in einen Hüftengürtel verwoben oder über ein kleines Holzkreuz (Waniga = 'Fadenkreuz') gespannt. Dieses wird in ein Wasserloch geworfen und von der dort verborgenen mythologischen Schlange, die das Totenreich beherrscht, verschlungen" (Worms 1959, 304).

46 "Fadenkreuze und ihre verschiedenen Abarten sind echte Ritualgeräte von temporärer Bedeutung. Die Australier glauben, dass sie übernatürliche Wesen in rudimentärer Bildform wiedergeben und enthalten" (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 163).

47 "Bei den Aranda sind die Haarfäden dichter aneinandergereiht als im Nordwesten und durch angeklebte Flaumfedern sowie durch Anbringung von Habicht- und Emufedern an den Ecken sorgfältiger herausgearbeitet. In den Kimberleys sehen wir durchgängig eine einfache Bespannung mit weißen, blauen, roten und grünen Wollfäden, die durch Kauf oder Austausch erhältlich sind. Diese sternartigen Kreuzrahmen oder wana werden beim sakralen Tanz an kurzen Stielen entweder in den Händen getragen oder mit den Zähnen gehalten" (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 160).

48 "Wie schon einige vorhergehende Bemerkungen verriet, sind die ätherischen waya ebenso wie die Tjurungabretter symbolische Erscheinungs-embleme von Geistern. Von einer rituellen Überreichung—wie bei der tjurunga—ist uns jedoch nichts bekannt. Ihr Gebrauch beschränkt sich auf Tänze mit religiöser, aber auch profaner Thematik. Die sorgfältige Aufbewahrung, die den Schwirrhölzern jahrelang zuteil wird, fehlt. Obwohl es viele Mühe kostet, sie für eine Feier herzustellen, werden sie nur einmal gebraucht und dann beiseite gelegt. Man versteckt sie unter einem Blätterhaufen in der Nähe des Djalai-Platzes und lässt sie verfallen. In den meisten Fällen werden sie aber heute nach ihrer kultischen Verwendung 'demontiert' und ihre Bestandteile, Wolle und Holzstäbe, für neue Fadenkreuz-Konstruktionen aufbewahrt. Diese rasche Zerstörung ist der Hauptgrund, weshalb die wenig widerstandsfähigen waya so selten ihren Weg in ethnologische Sammlungen finden" (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 162).

ritual implements of temporary importance. The Australians believe that they represent and contain supernatural beings in a rudimentary visual form. Therefore, they are equivalent to tjurungas made of wood and shell.⁴⁹

The letters Worms wrote to Antweiler contain some additional information about the meaning and provenance of these two thread crosses. [76]

Thread Cross (Inv. No. 23)

This thread cross (figure 6) that Worms sent to Antweiler in October 1957 had been given to him in May of the same year by the members of the Njol Njol tribe during a farewell party at the Beagle Bay Mission after it had been used in a particular dance.⁵⁰ Worms further explained that the object usually is held in the hand during the dance or is used as a head ornament and that it is an exoteric object for the tribes at the Beagle Bay Mission, while inland tribes like the Aranda, the Gogadja and the Walmadjeri consider it an esoteric object.⁵¹ He adds that in an adaptation to the current situation modern materials are now used to make thread crosses instead of twisted human hair that was dyed with red and yellow ochre and coal dust. In his study of the Australian religions, Worms writes: [77]

Between two and six crossed, short sticks are connected by several parallel strands of braided human hair, today often with colored woolen threads, so that four- to thirteen-pointed 'stars' with a diameter of 20 to 100 cm are created.⁵² [78]

In his correspondence with Antweiler, Worms continues—referring to the works by Strehlow—to explain that such devices once were decorated with bird feathers of different sizes.⁵³ The expression “wana” that people at the Beagle Bay Mission used for these objects is traced back by Worms to an original meaning of “spider’s web”; he informs Antweiler at the same time that a meaning of “spirit” or “spirit of a dead person” is also possible (see also Worms 1957, 732–68), which he considers a later popular etymological reinterpretation.⁵⁴ [79]

49 “Zusammenfassend stellen wir fest: Fadenkreuze und ihre verschiedenen Abarten sind echte Ritualgeräte von temporärer Bedeutung. Die Australier glauben, dass sie übernatürliche Wesen in rudimentärer Bildform wiedergeben und enthalten. Deshalb sind sie den Holz- und Muscheltjurunga gleichwertig” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 163).

50 “Als ich nach m. Ankunft in Australien Anfang dieses Jahres (Mai) unsere Beagle B. Mission besuchte, um Abschied zu nehmen, fuehrten die Njol Njol einen besonderen Abschiedstanz fuer mich auf, wobei sie dieses Geraet benutzten und mir mitgaben” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, November 6, 1957, ULB Münster, 009,179).

51 “Am 22. October sandte ich Ihnen ein ‘Fadenkreuz’ or [sic!] ‘thread cross,’ das beim Tanz von den australischen Eingeborenen in der Hand oder als Kopftracht getragen wird. Bei den Staemmen unserer Beagle Bay Mission und Nachbarn ist es ein exoterisches Geraet, im Inneren, wie bei den Aranda, Gogadja, Walmadjeri (alle, ausser den ersten gehoeren zu unserem Kimberley Vikariat), ist es esoterisch“ (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, November 6, 1957, ULB Münster, 009,179).

52 “Zwei bis sechs überkreuzte kurze Stöcke werden mit mehreren parallellaufenden Strähnen aus geflochteem Menschenhaar, heute vielfach mit bunten Wollfäden, so verbunden, daß vier- bis dreizehneckige ‘Sterne’ mit einem Durchmesser von 20 bis 100 cm entstehen” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 160).

53 “Die Herstellung hat sich der Neuzeit angepasst. Frueher wurden die Faeden aus gedrehten Menschenhaaren hergestellt, die dann mich [sic!] rotem und gelben Ocker und Holzkohlenstaub gefaerbt wurden. Schlagen Sie bitte C. Strehlow, ‘Die Aranda- und Loritjastaemme in Zentral-Australien’, Frankfurt/M., 1908, Bd. 1, 1. Teil, Tafel VII & VIII auf. Dann koennen Sie sehen, dass die Aranda und Loritja (ein anderer Name fuer unsere Gogadja) die Faeden mit kleinen Vogelfedern (Flaum) beklebt hatten. An den Enden der Querstuecke wurden laengere Vogelfedern (Habicht) angebracht“ (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, November 6, 1957, ULB Münster, 009,179).

54 “Der Name und seine Herkunft ist von Interest [sic!]. Unsere Beagle Bay Leute nennen es waja. Die Nachbarn wanjara, wangara, wangarara, wanjarara mit der urspruenglichen Bedeutung von ‘Spinnengewebe.’ Die

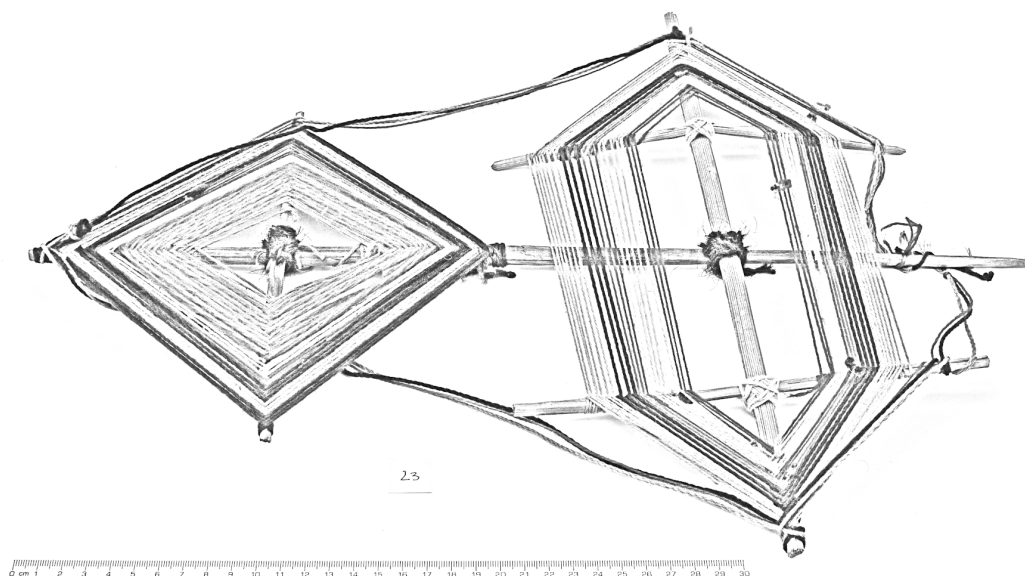


Figure 6 Thread Cross, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 23, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

Thread Cross (missing)

Another, seemingly much larger and visually more attractive thread cross was sent to Antweiler by Worms in March 1958 from Manly. This object, called waninga or wanigi, came from the area around Dampier in Northwestern Australia and was made, like the other thread cross, by members of the Njol Njol tribe who lived at the Beagle Bay Mission as followers of Christianity.⁵⁵ How he got hold of this thread cross Worms does not explain. Instead, he describes the meaning and use of this object:

It represents the ‘soul’ of the deceased, is therefore an image of a spirit. Usually, the hair of the deceased is cut by certain relatives, preferably by his wife and her brother, and is stretched onto a cross on point like the coloured wool threads today. The spirit of the deceased is in the waninga. Among the inland tribes it is presented to the relatives by the widow or her brother (it is not esoteric) and after the final burial one of these two throws it into a waterhole. There, it is devoured by the mythological water or rainbow snake, a symbol of fertility and perishability. Human hair is used to hold the cross together as well as on the oval ‘grass string.’ This oval is pushed over face and chin. Thus, during the men’s dance this frame or the deceased hovers high above the group. This frame has a horizontal rectangle

Spinne selbst wird genannt: wanganagara. – Es ist aber auch eine andere Worterklärung möglich, die ich in §29 meiner ‘Australian Mythological Terms’ anwandte, nämlich: wan-gar ‘Schatten,’ ‘Geist,’ ‘Geist eines Verstorbenen.’ Ich bin geneigt aus dem Parallellismus [sic!] ähnlicher Entwicklungen, wie Sie in ‘A. M. T.’ ersehen könnten, die letzte [sic!] Erklärung als die wirkliche anzunehmen, und die erste als eine spätere ‘Volksetymologie’ (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, November 6, 1957, ULB Münster, 009,179).

55 “Vom letzten Land sandte ich Ihnen am 12. dsMts. ein grösseres, aber leichtes Paket: ein ziemlich grosses ‘Fadenkreuz’ oder Waninga oder Wanigi vom Dampier Land, Nord-Westaustralien, vom Stamme der Njol Njol, alles Christen die auf unserer Missionsstation Beagle Bay leben. Es ist [sic!] etwas ansehnlicher als das erste einfachere Fadenkreuz, das ich Ihnen zuerst sandte” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, March 23, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,181).

[80]

[81]

below the cross on point or the square which has no other reason than to represent the human figure (body) a bit more clearly.⁵⁶

Worms values this thread cross at 25.00 Deutsche Mark.⁵⁷ [82]

Headdress (Inv. No. 19)

Also produced by the Njol Njol was a ritual hairdress (figure 7). Worms informed Antweiler in a letter in January 1958 about it being shipped shortly. [83]

I shall send you a fourth parcel with a Njol Njol women's headdress. It consists of a ring, braided from kangaroo hair and wrapped with human hair. Hanging from this ring are five similar strands; the long front teeth of kangaroos are fixed to their ends with resin. The ring is pressed around the forehead and the strands hang down in front of the face.⁵⁸ [84]

The value of the headdress is given by Worms as 10.00 Deutsche Mark.⁵⁹ A little later Antweiler acknowledges the receipt of the object⁶⁰ and the headdress is finally added to the collection register as acc. no. 19. The works by Worms do not contain any further description or interpretation of such a headdress. [85]

Headdress made of mother-of-pearl (Inv. No. 17, 18)

Together with the headdress mentioned above, Worms also gave to the collection two narrow mother-of-pearl plates (figures 8 and 9), about 10 cm in length and with one pointed end, which were also used as a headdress: [86]

The two mother-of-pearl pieces in the shape of a lancet are made by the Njol [87]

56 "Es stellt die 'Seele' des Verstorbenen dar, ist somi[t] das Bild eines Geistes. Gewoehnlich wird das Haar des Verstorbenen von bestimmten Verwandten, vorzgl. von seinem Weib und deren Bruder abgeschnitten, und auf ein auf der Kante stehendem Kreuz so wie die bunten Wollfäden von heute gespannt. Der Geist des + ist in dem Waninga. Es wird bei den Staemmen des inneren von der Witwe oder deren Bruder den Verwandten gezeigt (es ist nicht esoterisch) und nach der endgueltigen Bestattung von einem dieser beiden in ein Wasserloch geworfen. Dort wird es von der mythologischen Wasser- oder Regenbogen Schlange, dem Symbol der Fruchtbarkeit (und des Vergehens), verschlungen. Menschenhaare sind zur Verknuepfung des Kreuzes verwandt, ebenso an dem ovalen 'Grasstrick'. Dieses Oval wird ueber Gesicht und Kinn geschoben. So schwebt beim Tanz der Maenner dieses Gestell oder der Verstorbene hoch ueber der Gruppe. Dieses Gestell hat unter dem gekanteten Kreuz oder Viereck ein wagerechtes [sic!] Rechteck, was [hier gestrichen: wohl] zu nichts anderem dienen soll, als die Menschengestalt (Koerper) etwas deutlicher darzustellen [...]" (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, March 23, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,181).

57 Worms: Letter to Antweiler, March 23, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,181.

58 "Ich werde Ihnen ein viertes Paeckchen schicken mit einem Kopfschmuck der Frauen der Njol Njol [Handwritten addition: 'Hier beigelegt'; the hair decoration was obviously posted together with the spearheads and the mother-of-pearl sheets.]. Es besteht aus einem Ring, geflochten aus Kaengaruhhaaren und ist umdreht mit Menschenhaaren. An diesem Ring haengen 5 aehnliche hergestellte Straehnen, an deren Enden sich die langen Schneidezahne von Kaengeruhs befinden, die mit dem ebenerwaehten Harz daran befestigt sind. Der Ring wird um die Stirne gedreht, und die Straehnen haengen vor dem Gesicht herunter. Vielleicht kann ich ihnen den Eingeborenen Namen spaeter nach Rueckkehr nach Manly mitteilen" (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180).

59 Apart from the headdress, here called "Schlei[e]r (Menschen harr [sic!] und Zaehne)" [veil (human hair and teeth)], "2 Speerspitzen" (2 spearheads), "2 Lanzetten (Perlmutter)" (2 mother-of-pearl lancets), as well as "2 Klanghoelzer" (2 claves), "1 Phallus Stein" (1 phallus stone) and "50 Steinwerkzeuge z.T. Microlithen" (50 stone tools, some microliths) are brought to account with an overall value of 110.00 Deutsche Mark (Worms: Letter to the University of Münster, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143, Nr. 34,48).

60 Antweiler: Letter to Worms, January 21, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143 Nr. 34, 47.

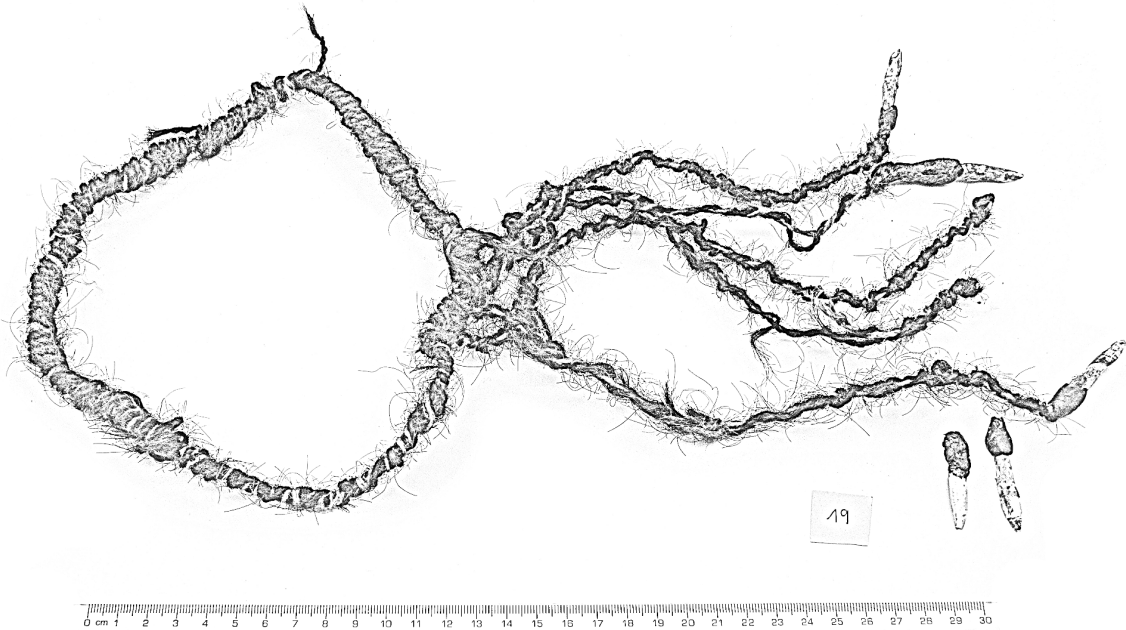


Figure 7 Headdress, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 19, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

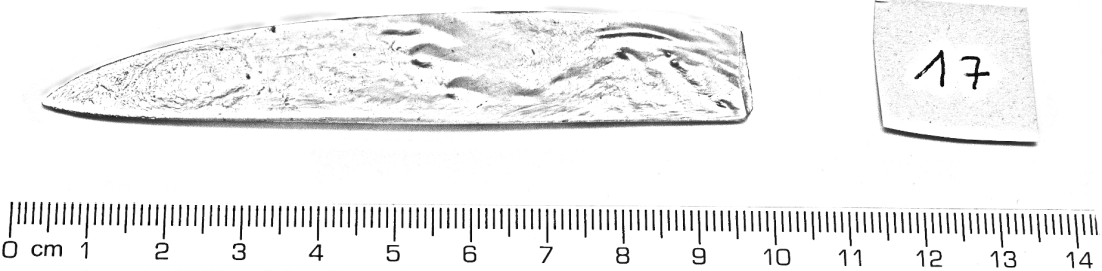


Figure 8 Headdress made of mother-of-pearl, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 17, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.



Figure 9 Fig. 9: Headdress made of mother-of-pearl, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 18, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

Njol of Beagle Bay Mission on the West coast of Kimberley; they are made from the large shells of the Large Pearl Oyster (*Pinctada Maxima*) which are gathered by the local pearl fishing industry. These pieces are called *bindje bindje*. While thinking of the mythological aeons and during rites of fertility they are worn by the natives in the hair above both temples. They are the external expression of a powerful connection with the supernatural.⁶¹

Worms quotes a value of 10,00 Deutsche Mark for these mother-of-pearl ornaments.⁶²

[88]

Spearheads (Inv. No. 15, 16)

The collection of the Institute for the Study of Religion contains two spearheads made of glass and quartzite respectively (figures 10 and 11); they were acquired at roughly the same time as the headdresses. The one made of glass is a so-called Kimberley spearhead. This kind of object was produced in a region limited to the area of Kimberley and mostly made from broken pieces of glass. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they were popular among collectors of “primitive” art and were regarded as examples of an authentic aboriginal culture due to their “stone age” production technique and despite their modern material.⁶³ Recent research shows that the Aborigines themselves were involved in the distribution of these objects and benefitted from the myths created around these authentic stone-age tools (on this question see Harrison 2006).

[89]

The spearhead made from a glass shard is marked “W” (= collection Worms?), the quartzite

[90]

61 “Die beiden lanzetfoermigen Perlmutterstuecke sind von den Njol Njol der Beagle Bay Mission, an der Westkueste Kimberleys, hergestellt, u. zwar aus den grossen Schalen der Grossen Perlmuttermuschel, die ja in der dortigen Perlfischerindustrie gesammelt wird. Diese Stuecke werden *bindje bindje* genannt. Beim Denken an die mythologische Vorzeit und bei Fruchtbarkeitsriten werden sie von den Eingeborenen in die Kopfhaare ueber den beiden Schlaefen gesteckt. Sie sind der aeussere Ausdruck einer machtvollen Verbindung mit dem Uebernaturlichen” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180).

62 Worms: Letter to the University of Münster, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143, Nr. 34,48.

63 The German anthropologist and collector Hermann Klaatsch (1863–1916) visited a production site of such spearheads near Wyndham during his extensive, multi-annual tour of Australia in summer of 1906 and acquired a selection of objects in different stages of production. In a letter to the prehistorian Otto Schoetensack he remarks that these items originally were made from dark quartzite, which had become rare; therefore, glass had been introduced as replacement (Erckenbrecht 2010, 153). According to contemporary reports this glass was often taken from broken bottles or the insulators of telegraph poles (Balfour 1903, 65).

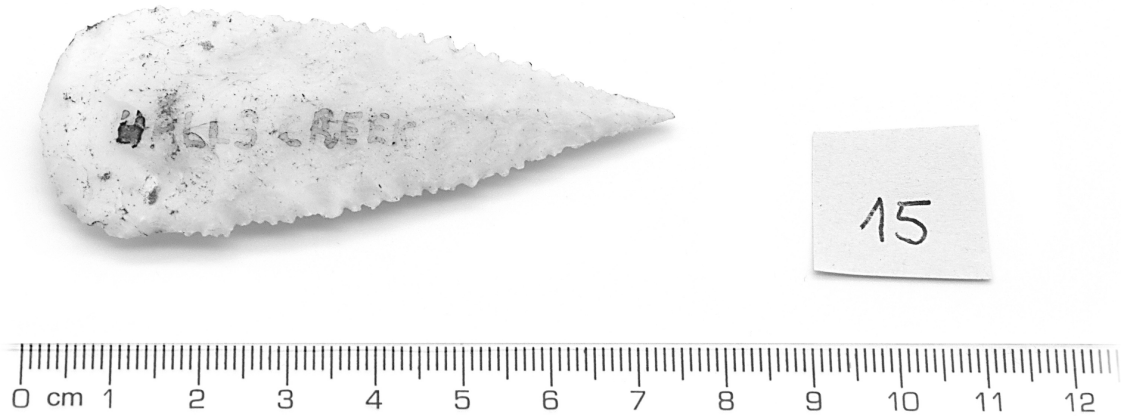


Figure 10 Spearhead, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 15, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

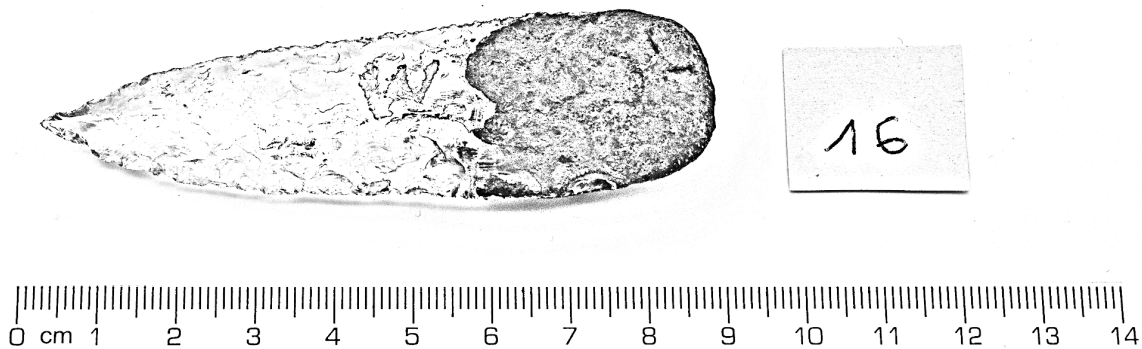


Figure 11 Spearhead, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 16, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

spearhead bears an inscription “Halls Creek,” probable naming either the place of production or the site where the piece was acquired. Worms was well aware of the fact that at least the glass spearhead was a contemporary product:

The spearheads were made by the Djaro. One is knapped in the old style from white quartzite, the other one from a piece of glass imported by the white, maybe a bottle shard. This means modern material, ancient technique. The production a truly an art. On the glass there is the resin of bunchgrass (Triodia) that was used to fix the piece to the shaft.⁶⁴

[91]

There is no information in the available correspondence about the production and acquisition of the quartzite spearhead. Antweiler merely confirms in a short note that he received a spearhead.⁶⁵ Both objects together were listed in the invoice by Worms with a value of 10,00 Deutsche Mark.⁶⁶

[92]

64 “Die Speerspitzen wurden von den Djaro [...] hergestellt. Eines ist nach altem Stil aus weissem Quarzit gehämmert, das andere aus einem Stueck Glas, das von den Weissen importiert wurde, vielleicht eine Flaschenscherbe. Also neuzeitliches Material, uralte Technik. Die Herstellung ist eine wahre Kunst. Am Glass [sic!] befindet sich das Harz des Stachelgrasses [sic!] oder Spinifex (Triodia), mit dem das Stueck an den Speerschaft verkittet wurde” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180).

65 Antweiler: Letter to Worms, March 14, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143 Nr. 34,42.

66 Worms: Letter to the University of Münster, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143, Nr. 34,48.

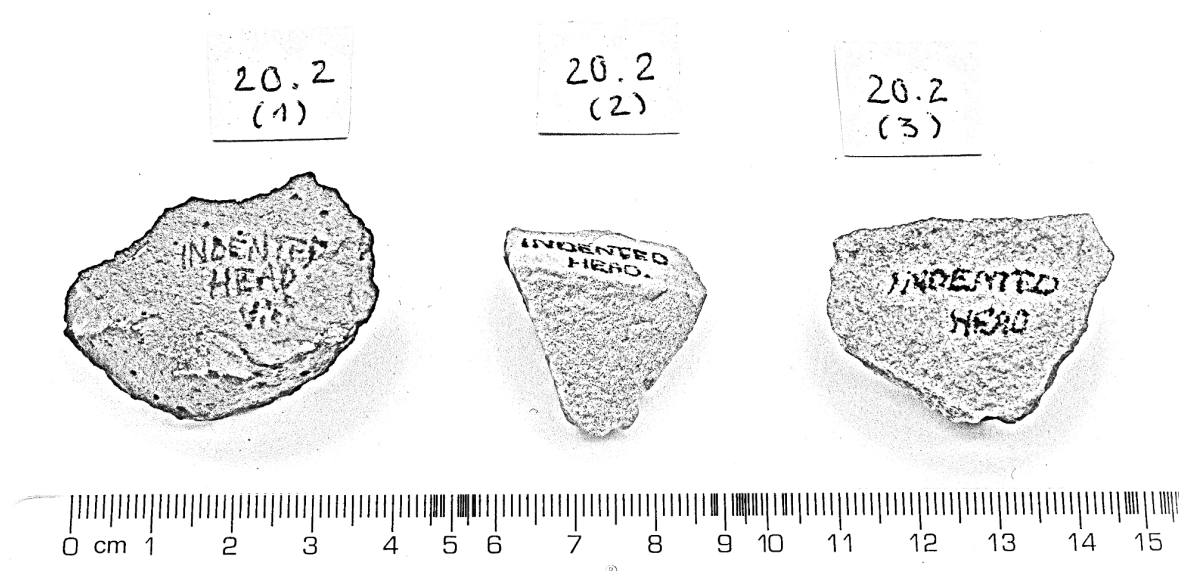


Figure 12 Stone tools, Religionskundliche Sammlung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Inv. No. 20.2, © Institut für Religionswissenschaft, WWU Münster, 2021.

Stone tools (Inv. No. 20, 1–9)

Apart from the spearheads, Worms gave a convolute of stone tools to the collection (see table 3); these were all discovered in the area around Melbourne (figure 12). The convolute comprises mostly plain arrowheads, blades, scrapers and drills. Whether these are prehistoric or new objects is not documented and the circumstances of their discovery also are unknown. They are probably surface finds that Worms either discovered himself or that were brought to him. [93]

An exact assignment of the objects is impossible. The collection register mentions as acc. no. 20 a collection of stone tools (“Sammlung von Steinwerkzeugen”) and in a later entry under acc. no. 18.1–6 some nondescript stones from Australia (“Steine, Australien”). From the correspondence with Antweiler it can be derived that Worms posted a parcel with 50 stone tools to Münster on January 15, 1958. The accompanying letter only contains a brief description of these objects: [94]

They were discovered near Melbourne (i. e. to the west of Melbourne). The sites are noted on almost every piece. Among them are several microliths of particular delicateness. The black Australian producers are extinct.⁶⁷ [95]

The invoice for this convolute of 50 stone tools, some of them (“50 Steinwerkzeuge, z.T. Mikrolithen”) gives a value of 50.00 DM.⁶⁸ The stone tools listed in the register as acc. no. 20 were most certainly part of this convolute; 31 of them are still preserved. [96]

Antweiler confirmed the receipt of 50 stone samples (“50 Steinproben”).⁶⁹ It cannot be ruled out that the nine stone tools later registered as acc. no. 18.1–6 were also part of the [97]

67 “Sie wurden in der Naehе von Melbourne (d. h. westl von Melbourne) gefunden. Die Fundstellen sind auf fast jedem Stueck geschrieben. Darunter befinden sich etliche Microlithen von besonderer Zartheit. Die schwarzen australischen Hersteller sind ausgestorben” (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, 009,180).

68 Worms: Letter to the University of Münster, January 15, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143, Nr. 34,48.

69 Antweiler: Letter to Worms, March 14, 1958, ULB Münster, Bestand 143 Nr. 34,42.

convolute. It is, however, more likely that they were part of another convolute of stone tools which Worms invoiced on February 7, 1957, through his brother, who lived in Münster.⁷⁰ This convolute contained several other objects which can no longer be traced in the collection; among them a knapped stone axe, a stone knife for initiation rites, a Tjuringa (see above) and five pastel drawings by an aborigine.⁷¹ The whereabouts of these objects are unknown.

Table 3 List of stone tools in the collection

Acc. No.	Inscription/Place of origin
20,1 (1)	Melton
20,1 (2)	Toolern Vale
20,2 (1)	Indented Head Vic.
20,2 (2)	Indented Head
20,2 (3)	Indented Head
20,3 (1)	Rockbak
20,3 (2)	R-Bank
20,3 (3)	Rockbank
20,3 (4)	R-Bank
20,4 (1)	<i>illegible</i>
20,5 (1)	B-Marsh (Bacchus-Marsh?)
20,5 (2)	Toolern Vale
20,6	G-Borough
20,7 (1)	Altona Vic.
20,7 (2)	Altona Vic.
20,7 (3)	Altona
20,7 (4)	Altona Vic.
20,7 (5)	<i>illegible</i>
20,7 (6)	Altona Vic.
20,8 (1)	Altona
20,8 (2)	<i>No inscription</i>
20,8 (3)	Altona Vic.
20,8 (4)	Altona Vic.
20,8 (5)	A
20,8 (6)	A
20,8 (7)	Altona
20,8 (8)	Altona
20,9 (1)	Rockbank
20,9 (2)	Rockbank
20,9 (3)	Rockbank
20,9 (4)	Rock-Bank

70 Worms: Letter to Antweiler, February 7, 1957, ULB Münster 008,079.

71 "12 australische Klein-Steinwerkzeuge; 1 austral. Steinbeil, gehämmert & geschliffen; 1 austral. Steinmesser f. Initiationszeremonien; 1 austral. Tjuringa-Schwirrholz; 5 Original Pastellzeichnungen eines austr. Eingeb. (Worms: Letter to Antweiler, February 7, 1957, ULB Münster 008,079).

The Importance of the Australian Objects for the Collection

Antweiler's writings do not provide any information about which insights he expected to gain from the Worms collection. Taking his publications into account, we assume that he aimed at depicting "religion" globally and comprehensively and therefore felt that the inclusion of "primitive" stages was essential. [98]

Religion, and piety in particular, encompasses devotion and distance, trust and fright, security and desolation, power and impotence, loveliness and awfulness, depravation and salvation. All this a human does not enclose within himself but expresses it through garments, ornaments, tools and buildings.⁷² [99]

The collection of the Dept. of Religious Studies wants to offer such objects to make sure that an attempt to familiarize yourself with the multiple forms of religion does not have to rely exclusively on words and depictions but can turn to the visual, which often provides more than words can express. The collection not only comprises Christianity, Judaism and the Mediterranean but also those non-European regions not explicitly Christian or Jewish; it includes high as well as primitive religions. It does not focus on the aesthetical and historical qualities of an object but on it being typical. It wants to showcase characteristics and expressions of piety and be a contribution to prevent the premature definition of anything as definite and final. What it can offer depends largely on chance. It depends on what has been regarded as expressive; on what material was used; on which objects were preserved; on which of these objects came into the market; on whether they matched the collection in terms of size and content; on whether information about the available pieces gets to us and, finally, on whether at that particular moment the money is at hand to acquire them.⁷³ [100]

At the same time, the Australian religions were important enough to Antweiler to invite Worms to Münster as a guest lecturer. For a brief period of time, Antweiler seems to have had the idea that he could represent the entire spectrum of religious traditions in human history in his collection, using exemplary objects. As such, the Australian objects would have represented the most 'primitive' religion, fitting with ideas that had already been formulated by Emile Durkheim (Durkheim 1912). For instance, in Worm's monograph about the religions of Australia, the authors note: "Many full-blooded Australians practically still live in [101]

72 "Religion, besonders als Frömmigkeit, umfasst Hingabe und Abstand, Vertrauen und Erschrecken, Geborgenheit und Verlorenheit, Macht und Ohnmacht, Liebliches und Furchtbares, Verworfenheit und Erlösung. Alles das verschließt der Mensch nicht in sich, sondern gibt es kund durch Kleidung, Schmuck, Geräte und Gebäude" (Antweiler 1965, 41).

73 "Die Religionsgeschichtliche Sammlung will solche Gegenstände darbieten, damit, wenn man die vielfältigen Formen der Religion kennenlernen will, man nicht nur auf Worte und Abbildungen, sondern auf Sichtbares verweisen kann, das oft mehr vermittelt, als Worte je sagen können. Die Sammlung berücksichtigt nicht den christlichen, den jüdischen und den mittelmeerischen Raum, sondern den außereuropäischen, sofern er nicht christlich oder jüdisch ist, ebensowohl die 'Hoch'- als auch die 'Primitiv'religionen. Sie bezieht sich nicht vorerst auf das Ästhetische und Geschichtliche, sondern auf das Typische. Sie will Kennzeichen und Ausdrucksformen der Frömmigkeit anschaulich machen und dazu beitragen, sich nicht, vor allem sich nicht vorzeitig, auf Endgültiges und Eindeutiges festzulegen. Für das, was sie bieten kann, ist sie weitgehend vom Zufall abhängig. Davon, was als ausdrucksfähig angesehen wurde; davon, welches Material benutzt wurde; davon, welche Stücke erhalten blieben; davon, was davon in irgendeiner Weise in den Handel kam; davon, ob sie nach Größe und Inhalt zur Sammlung passen; davon, ob man von den verfügbaren Stücken erfährt, und endlich davon, ob man zu der gegebenen Zeit über das Geld verfügt, sie zu erwerben" (Antweiler 1965, 42).

the stone age today.”⁷⁴ In that sense, they write that the places where the indigenous keep their tjurunga, in their “serious simplicity,” give the visitor the awe-inspiring impression of standing at sacred sites of religious people. They are described as “filled to the brim with religious meaning”, a “silent testimony of belief in the mysterious, concentrated presence of the spirit.”⁷⁵ This description does not stand in explicit contradiction to the Christian world-view that Worms and Antweiler share as Catholic theologians. Rather, it might have been perceived by them as a pre-Christian, basic religiosity that only waits for missionary intervention. In the same manner of speaking, the authors use Christian theological terms such as “Bergwallfahrt” (mountain pilgrimage) or “Bittgebet” (supplicatory prayer), indicating that Worm’s observations in Australia are seen merely as preliminary stages to the Christian religion (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 217).

In his book *Die Religionen der Südsee* (*The Religions of the South Seas*), co-authored with Hans Nevermann and Helmut Petri and published after Worms’ death, there are a few passages concerning the material culture of Australian indigenous peoples. The chapter about the “Religions of the Australian Mainland” starts with a section about “Holy Utensils” (“Heilige Geräte”), which is an indication that Worms and his colleagues deemed these artifacts important (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 136). They explain:

What is behind these artifacts is the unified belief of a simple savage and nomadic people in the continued proximity of supernatural beings brought about by these devices and the reactivation of the invisible forces emanating from them, as well as in the mythical furtherance of all human and cosmic events that burst forth from the liturgy associated with the device. To make these devices, any material is welcome and sacred to the Australian – whether wood or stone, bone or hair, bark or grass, shell or fruit. The ornaments and conventional motifs applied to them document in a primal way the colored Australian’s world of belief, his religious sensibilities, and his expectations of existence in the context of tonal, declamatory, and dramatic rites. They are his secret and his mysterious weapons, signs of his sacred rank and his far-reaching power. His locally differentiated sense of design continually discovers new variations of liturgical devices, from which he promises himself with even greater certainty an even closer contact with the spiritual world and his material environment. The continental agreement of the basic idea behind this multiplicity of cult devices reflects an unexpected religious unity of the cult life of mainland Australia, which also absorbed foreign influences almost seamlessly.⁷⁶

74 “Viele Vollblutaustralier leben praktisch auch heute noch in der Steinzeit” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 35).

75 “Aufgeschichtet auf tischartigen Astgestellen unter dem Schatten eines immergrünen Baumes oder in Reihen im Hintergrund dunkler Höhlen auf einsamer Bergeshöhe aufgestellt, erwecken [die tjurunga] bei dem Besucher in ihrer ernsten und monotonen Einfachheit den ehrfurchtgebietenden Eindruck, an geweihter Stätte religiöser Naturmenschen zu stehen. Sie sind beredete Zeichen, randvoll erfüllt von religiöser Bedeutung, ein stilles Zeugnis des Glaubens an die mysteriöse, konzentrierte Gegenwart des Geistes und an die wenn auch unsichtbare, so doch wirksame Verbundenheit mit der transzendentalen Welt. Hier steht der Eingeborene bewusst an der sichtbaren Quelle seiner biologischen und sozialen Sicherheit und seines religiös unterbauten Selbstbewusstseins, Teilnehmer an der Verteilung des von der Urzeit her fließenden Lebensstromes zu sein” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 151).

76 “Hinter ihnen steht der einheitliche Glaube eines einfachen Wildbeuter- oder Nomadenvolkes an die durch diese Geräte erwirkte, fortdauernde Nähe übernatürlicher Wesen und die Reaktivierung der von ihnen ausgehenden unsichtbaren Kräfte sowie an die mythische Förderung alles menschlichen und kosmischen Geschehens, das aus der mir dem Gerät verknüpften Liturgie hervorbricht. Zur Herstellung dieser Geräte ist dem Australier jedes Material willkommen und heilig – ob Holz oder Stein, Knochen oder Haare, Rinde

[102]

[103]

They list a few ritual objects of relevance to the Australian indigenous peoples, for instance the so-called bullroarers, tjurungas made of wood, stone, or shell, ethereal crosshairs and earth-grown trees, movable bark images and immovable cave and rock images and stone settings; but also instruments such as the drone horn and wooden gong; and sacred sites, huts and pits (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 137). [104]

Conclusions

Our main interest in describing and analyzing the “Worms-collection” at Münster University was to understand what these objects tell us about Antweiler’s and Worms’ perspective on indigenous Australian cultures and, more specifically, about their religions. Corresponding about Aboriginal cultures and religions and sending material objects to Münster, Worms and Antweiler left a material testimony, revealing how they—embedded in a more general Catholic theological discourse in the middle of the twentieth century—perceived Australian indigenous societies and their religious views. [105]

This material testimony may well be complemented by the textual evidence that we have used throughout this paper. For instance, Worms (edited by Nevermann to an uncertain extent) often wrote in an almost admiring and respectful tone about “the Australian” religions, their simplicity and humbleness: [106]

The awareness that the powerful presence of the great spiritual beings is with him in small format in hands and neck pouches on his wanderings is not enough for the religious experience of the Australian; nor is it convenient for him to perform the consecration of his places of worship by bringing the hidden religious hand stones to it over and over again. Like most indigenous peoples, the Australian natives have built permanent stone cult sites to which generations of the surrounding tribes have made pilgrimages to perform sacred acts. On forest clearings and in flat steppe hollows, on the seashore and on mountain heights, where they look like trigonometric points, the sacred stones stand in lonely and untouched, isolated or in groups, piled on top of each other or lined up, free or rammed into rock crevices. How often have we undertaken long walks through tropical forests and over hot sand hills in the company of natives, or crossed estuaries with their help to reach unknown small islands in anticipation of impressive monuments of which they could not tell enough! Spoilt by the majesty of classical buildings of Europe and the Mediterranean basin, we felt quite disillusioned at first when the naked hunter figures suddenly stopped in front of inconspicuous cairns in visible respect and silent timidity. In elementary simplicity, without interpretive ornamentation, these stones are a simple reflection of the faith of these indigenous people. We first [107]

oder Gras, Muscheln oder Früchte. Die auf ihnen angebrachten Verzierungen und konventionellen Motive dokumentieren in einer ursprünglichen Weise des farbigen Australiers Glaubenswelt, sein religiöses Empfinden und seine Daseinserwartungen im Zusammenhang mit tonalen, deklamatorischen und dramatischen Riten. Sie sind sein Geheimnis und seine geheimnisvollen Waffen, Zeichen seines sakralen Ranges und seiner weitreichenden Macht. Sein lokal differenzierter Gestaltungssinn entdeckt immer wieder neue Variationen liturgischer Geräte, von denen er sich mit noch größerer Gewißheit einen noch engeren Kontakt mit der geistigen Überwelt und seiner materiellen Umwelt verspricht. Die hinter dieser Vielzahl von Kultgeräten stehende kontinentale Übereinstimmung der Grundidee spiegelt eine unerwartete religiöse Einheit des Kultlebens des australischen Festlandes wider, die auch auswärtige Einflüsse fast nahtlos in sich aufnahm” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 136).

had to learn to adapt our thoughts to their mythical categories, to absorb the weird meaning of their myths and to recognize them in the rites that followed, before we could see in the ancient stone blocks, the great stone circles and cracked termite mounds a monument to the spiritual. According to the belief of the Australian natives, these stones were always set up by spiritual beings in prehistoric times.⁷⁷

Additionally, Worms speaks explicitly of “art” regarding the material culture of the Aborigines, a concept that, at the time of his studies, would rarely be used with regard to indigenous artifacts: [108]

One cannot sufficiently admire the art by which these hunter and gatherer people create such a religious and psychological effect employing the simple means provided by nature [here referring to ‘holy caves’].⁷⁸ [109]

Generally, the appreciation of the material culture and art of Australian indigenous societies leads Worms and Nevermann to speak highly of their religious views: [110]

To the same extent that the Australians shaped their religious and social terminology with such admirable success, they also knew how to put their notions of a certain spirituality of the invisible principle of life into words which in their representativeness do not stand back behind European terminology.⁷⁹ [111]

Therefore, Helmut Petri may conclude: [112]

The extremely complex appearance of religiosity of a group of humans who lived at the ‘fringes of the oecumene,’ away from the processes of world history, for millennia, has found its appraisal in this posthumous work by Pater E.A. Worms [113]

77 “Dem religiösen Erlebnisdrang des Australiers genügt es nicht, die machtvolle Gegenwart der großen Geistwesen im Kleinformat in Händen und Halsbeuteln auf seinen Wanderungen bei sich zu wissen; auch liegt es ihm nicht, die Weihe seiner Kultplätze durch das Herbeibringen der verborgenen religiösen Handsteine immer wieder neu zu vollziehen. Wie die meisten Naturvölker, so haben auch die australischen Eingeborenen dauernde Steinkultstätten errichtet, zu denen Generationen der umliegenden Stämme zur Vollziehung heiliger Handlungen gepilgert sind. Auf Waldlichtungen und in flachen Steppenmulden, am Meeresstrand und auf Bergeshöhen, wo sie sich wie trigonometrische Punkte ausnehmen, stehen die heiligen Steine in einsamer Unberührtheit, vereinzelt oder in Gruppen, aufeinandergeschichtet oder aneinandergereiht, frei oder in Felsspalten gerammt. Wie oft haben wir in Begleitung von Eingeborenen weite Fußwanderungen durch tropische Wälder und über heiße Sandhügel unternommen oder mit ihrer Hilfe Meeresarme überquert, um zu unbekannt kleinen Inseln zu gelangen in Erwartung eindrucksvoller Monumente, von denen sie nicht genug erzählen konnten! Noch verwöhnt von der Majestät klassischer Bauten Europas und des Mittelmeerbeckens, fühlten wir uns anfangs recht ernüchert, wenn die nackten Jägergestalten plötzlich vor unauffälligen Steinhaufen in sichtbarer Achtung und schweigsamer Scheu haltmachten. In elementarer Einfachheit, ohne deutende Verzierungen sind diese Steine eine schlichte Widerspiegelung des Glaubens dieser Naturmenschen. Erst mussten wir lernen, unsere Gedanken ihren mythischen Denkkategorien anzupassen, den krausen Sinn der Mythen in uns aufzunehmen und in den folgenden Riten wiederzuerkennen, ehe wir in den alten Steinblöcken, den großen Steinkreisen und rissigen Termitenhügeln ein Denkmal des Geistigen erblicken konnten. Stets sind – nach dem Glauben der australischen Eingeborenen – diese Steine von Geistwesen in der Vorzeit aufgestellt worden” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 204).

78 “Man kann nicht genug die Kunst bewundern, mit der dieses Jäger- und Sammlervolk einen solchen religiös-psychologischen Effekt mit so einfachen, von der Natur bereitgestellten Mitteln hervorruft” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 218).

79 “In demselben Maße, in dem die Australier ihre religiöse und soziale Terminologie mit bewundernswertem Erfolg geformt haben, haben sie es auch verstanden, ihr Ahnen von einer gewissen Geistigkeit des unsichtbaren Lebensprinzips in Worte zu kleiden, deren Bildlichkeit den europäischen Fachausdrücken nicht nachsteht” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 274).

which—unintended by the author—is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the wide-spread, stereotypical prejudice of the ‘primitive’ and ‘stone-age’ Australian.⁸⁰

On a more conceptual note, our analysis contributes to the understanding of “material religion” in a very specific context: that of a missionary collection in a theological university collection, touching also on ethnographic interests in material culture. What an object ‘means’ is not a simple question and can be answered from many different perspectives, as Lissant Bolton points out: [114]

The meaning of objects is affected by their context: as objects are moved from context to context, their significance changes. The way in which the meaning of objects is affected by their immediate context is an increasingly recognized problem in ethnographic collection management and display. (Bolton 2003, 43) [115]

Bolton continues to explain that much of the early ethnographic collecting was done with the idea that objects were to ‘represent’ people, and keep their ‘way of life’ alive even when the indigenous societies would soon be extinct (2003, 43). Some of these assumptions are also visible in Antweiler’s collection when he assumes that the Australian objects represent an original, ‘primitive’ religion. [116]

As stated in the beginning, the authors’ intention was not to provide an in-depth ethnological analysis of the material in the Münster collection but to shed light on the multifaceted acquisition history of the objects and on how a careful examination of the objects and the circumstances accompanying their acquisition can help to understand the mindset of the people involved as well as intentional and unintentional messages transported by the inclusion of these pieces into this particular collection. It is to be hoped that by publishing these hitherto almost unknown objects they will become the subjects of further research by colleagues from ethnology and other disciplines and that this paper will encourage future research into other materials kept in smaller, often overlooked collections. [117]

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80 “Das außerordentlich komplexe Erscheinungsbild der Religiosität einer Menschheitsgruppe, die seit Jahrtausenden abseits der weltgeschichtlichen Vorgänge am ‘Rande der Ökumene’ lebte, fand in diesem nachgelassenen Werk von Pater E. A. Worms eine Würdigung, die das weit verbreitete, stereotype Vorurteil vom ‘primitiven’ und ‘steinzeitlichen’ Australier, vom Verfasser unbeabsichtigt, ad absurdum führt” (Nevermann, Worms, and Petri 1968, 298).

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