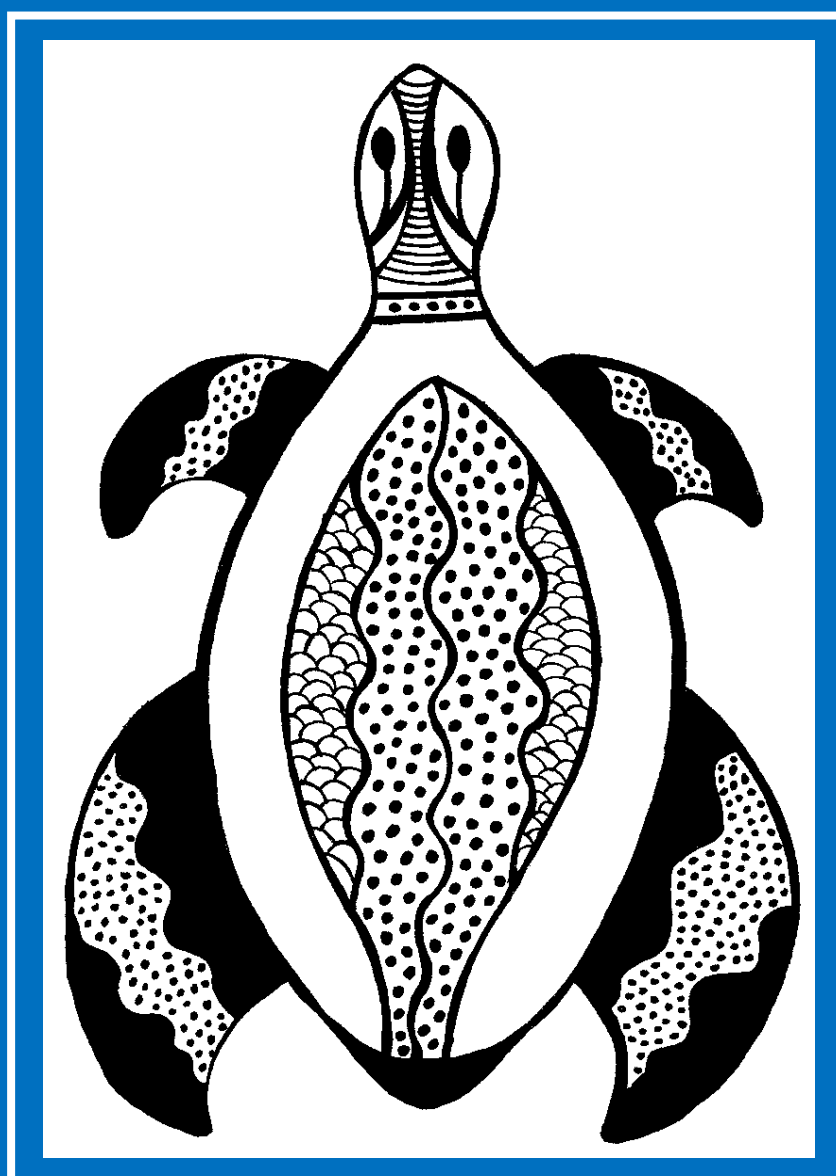


# A Bibliography of the Traditional Games of Torres Strait Islander Peoples



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The fan-shape and white feathers of the *dhari* or *dhoeri* headdress are symbolic of the Torres Strait and this is incorporated into the Torres Strait Island flag.





# **A Bibliography of the Traditional Games of Torres Strait Islander Peoples**

by **Ken Edwards** and **Tim Edwards**

Cover Illustration and other artwork by Aboriginal artist **Maxine Zealey** (of the Gurang Gurang people).

***Traditional Games Series***

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**ISBN: 978-0-9872359-1-6**

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## **Acknowledgements**

This bibliography has been produced to provide an awareness of play cultures undertaken by Torres Strait Islander peoples and to encourage further study of these as part of an understanding of the sporting heritage of Australia.

This bibliography is dedicated to **Torres Strait Islander peoples** in recognition of their 'ownership' of play and movement traditions.

**Ken Edwards and Tim Edwards**

***My Island Home – Christine Anu***  
I close my eyes and I'm standing,  
In a boat on the sea again.  
And I'm holding that long turtle spear  
And I feel that I'm close to where I must be.  
My island home is waiting for me.

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## Preface

As soon as they begin to sing one player strikes up the ball with his hand towards another player, who in his turn hits up the ball, and so on, keeping time to the rhythm of the music. The song is repeated as long as the game lasts. Should anyone let the ball fall to the ground, he is jeered at. According to one account, the game is properly played by two sides. Formerly they used for this game the thick, oval, deep red fruit of the *kai* tree ... which is quite light when dry; this fruit, which has a tough rind, varies from about 6 to 7 cm ... in length. At the present time they generally use a hollow cubical ball... made of pandanus or coco-nut palm leaves. This ball was introduced by South Sea men and is a common Polynesian toy; the names *kokan* (W) and *kai* (E) prove that it is a loan object. It varies in size from about 35 to 53 mm in diameter, an average size being 45 mm; one oblong example measures 55 by 95 mm. (Haddon, 1912: 313)

Haddon, A.C. 'Chapter XVII. Games and Toys'. In Haddon, A.C., Quiggin, A. Hingston., Rivers, W.H.R., Ray, S.H., Myers, C.S. and Bruce, R. (eds), *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits: Volume IV. Arts and Crafts*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 1912: (313)-341.

The Torres Strait Islands are the islands between the northern tip of Queensland and Papua New Guinea. Located in the Torres Strait are the home of many communities whose people have the collective identity of Torres Strait Islanders.

**Torres Strait Islander peoples** have their own unique cultures and while many aspects of these have disappeared, been diluted or transformed over time the prevailing nature and values of these cultures still exert a strong influence on the identity of the people.

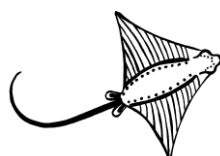
Games and pastimes of various descriptions have always been an integral part of the cultures in the Torres Strait Islands. Games traditionally placed emphasis on the development, preparation, and maintenance of physical skills of the children and youth, while the dances expressed more the core beliefs as well as environmental, communal, and personal happenings throughout life.

Because it is important to the **Torres Strait Islanders** to be seen as a separate and unique group in Australia with their own cultures a specific bibliography on the traditional games from this region has been prepared – **A Bibliography of the Traditional Games of Torres Strait Islander Peoples**. The information has been taken from an extensive review of information on play cultures in Australia that has been researched over many years.

**Ken Edwards and Tim Edwards**

I believe that the future generations in the Torres Strait as well as throughout the world need to be educated about the rich cultural heritage and distinctiveness of my culture.

- David Bosu [Wug Tribe] Moa Island.





## Introduction

Australia is one of the oldest land masses in the world, the sixth largest country in total area and the biggest island on the planet. Only a small proportion (just 6 per cent) is fertile country and it is one of the driest land areas. The Australian landmass stretches 4000 kilometres from east to west and 3700 kilometres from north to south.

The Commonwealth of Australia covers the continent of Australia (**Figure 1**) with an area of around 7,659,861 square kilometres and a coastline of 36,700 kilometres in length (or more than 120,000 kilometres if estuaries and all the islands are included). It includes sundry smaller islands (around 1800 in total) such as Fraser Island; the large island of Tasmania (68,332 square kilometres); and, the well over 100 relatively small and mostly uninhabited islands or cays (of which only about 40 are regularly marked on maps) of the Torres Strait Islands region.



**Figure 1:** Continent of Australia.

The main states and territories of Australia are New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. The Torres Strait Islands region (**Figure 2**) covers about 48,000 square kilometres within a 150 kilometre wide area between Cape York in North Queensland and Papua New Guinea. The Commonwealth of Australia also has control over some areas of land that are well offshore including Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island and Christmas Island as well as designated territory in Antarctica.



**Figure 2:** Torres Strait Islands Region.

The word *Torres* comes from the name of the Dutch explorer Luis Vaez de Torres. There are currently 17 inhabited islands in the Torres Strait Island region. The Torres Strait Islands have islands with local and names given to them by colonists. The biogeographical groups of the Torres Strait region are considered to be: the **western islands** including Badu, Moa, and Mabuiag; the **north-western (or top western) islands** (Boigu, Dauan, Saibai); the **eastern islands** (Ugar, Erub, Mer); the **central islands** (Masig, Poruma, Warraber, Aurid, Gebar, Tudu, lama); and, the **lower western islands** which include Muralag, Ngurupai, Waiben, Nagir and Kiriri. Torres Strait Islander communities are now also present at Bamaga and Seisia on the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula.

Geographical and cultural differences occur between the different areas and individual islands. The 'western' islands are of old volcanic origin; the 'central' islands are mostly atolls and cays; the 'northern' islands consist mainly of silt from rivers in Papua New Guinea; and the 'eastern' islands are the result of more recent volcanic activity. Traditionally, people of the eastern and northern areas lived in permanent villages and cultivated crops while on many of the other islands relied on hunting, fishing and gathering food. Trade was of particular importance to the central islands. In past times there was often rivalry and warfare between some of the islands and with a few groups from Papua New Guinea.

The people of the Torres Strait Islands region are essentially Melanesian people – with varying amounts of genetic and cultural influence from Australian Aboriginal people to the south. Torres Strait Islander people are generally believed to have originally travelled down from coastal and Fly River regions of Papua New Guinea. There has been regular contact between Papuan people and Aboriginal people for at least the last few thousand years. Some authorities have provided evidence of sustained settlement in the Torres Strait area for possibly 2,000-4,000 years BP time.

The total population of the Australian continent at the time of colonisation has variously been estimated at numbering between 250,000 and 750,000 – with some general agreement of a fairly static total of 300,000 to 400,000 people. The largest populations were in coastal and riverine Australia, particularly along the east coast and throughout the Murray-Darling basin. Estimates for the population of Torres Strait Islanders at the same time were of approximately 4000-5000 people. About 5000-7000 people were believed to have lived in Tasmania.

The present population of Australia is just under 23 million. Almost 545,000 people have identified themselves as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin which is just 2.3% of the total Australian population. Of the people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander 90% are Aboriginal, 6% are Torres Strait Islander and 4% identify as having both an Aboriginal and a Torres Strait Islander background. There are 6,800 Torres Strait Islanders who live in the area of the Torres Strait, and 42,000 others who live outside of this area, mostly in the north of Queensland, and particularly in the coastal cities of Townsville and Cairns.

## Terminology

The Indigenous people of Australia are the **Aboriginal people and the Torres Strait Islander peoples**.

Despite being problematic for some the use of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* is generally seen as an acceptable way of referring to the range of people who are Indigenous Australians. It should be acknowledged though that there are regional terms that are used to recognise the continued existence of Indigenous peoples in Australia.

**Aboriginal** is an encompassing term that covers people from a wide range of different cultural groups who inhabit the Australian continent and the large island of Tasmania. Despite this designation many Aboriginal people prefer to use their own local terms.

**Torres Strait Islanders** is commonly used to refer to the people of the Torres Strait Islands although many of these people identify with a particular island, village and/or group or family name

The **Torres Strait Islander peoples** have their own distinctive cultures which can vary between the different islands they inhabit. People from the *Torres Strait Island region* should never be referred to as *Aboriginal Australians*.

Over time the Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander peoples have developed as distinct groups and have significant differences *socio-culturally, politically and physically*.

## Torres Strait Island Languages

Two local languages are spoken in Torres Strait. **Kala Lagaw Ya**, an Aboriginal language, is used in the Western, Northern (*Kala Kawaw Ya* dialect) and Central islands (*Kulkaḷgaw Ya* dialect). On the Eastern islands, **Meriam Mir** is spoken, which is related to Papuan languages.

**Torres Strait creole** (Kriol, 'Broken', Yumiplatok) emerged after the arrival of missionaries in the 1870s and has become a community language alongside English. This is the language commonly used by all Torres Strait Islanders. More than 75% of Torres Strait Islanders living in the Torres Strait are reported to speak a language other than English at home.

## Cultural Areas

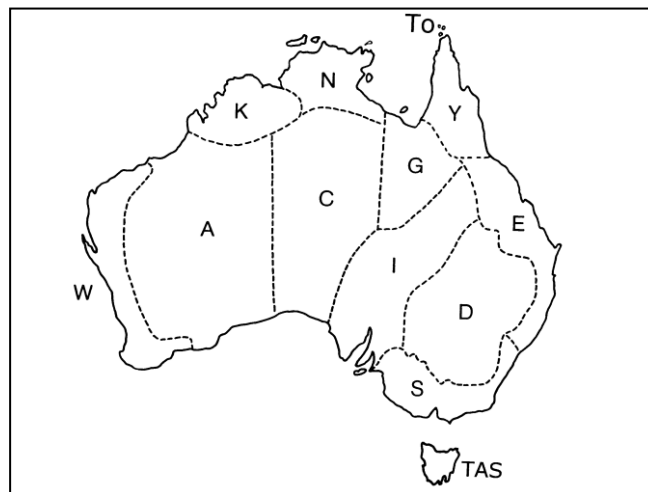
One approach that was used to aid in organising information for the bibliography was the identification and use of different **cultural areas** in Australia that the information might be associated with. Though this method was useful it involved a great deal of time as many of the sources of information needed to be intensively reviewed. This was required because inaccuracies in a good deal of the information made it difficult to be specific about the place of origin of recorded observations.

The way that the information in the final bibliography was compiled using the cultural areas of Australia is outlined below.

### ❖ Cultural Areas

Meehan and Bona (1986) compiled a *National Inventory of Aboriginal Artefacts* in which they referred to a number of general **Cultural Areas** in Australia that were used by museums to categorise artefacts. Within the artefact collections of toys and playthings in the various museums many of the play and pastime related activities were 'classified' using a coding system derived from the cultural area map.

The cultural areas, based as they were on general cultural similarities and some consideration of geography, are outlined in **Figure 3**.



**Figure 3: Cultural Areas:** Area A: Western Australia; Area C: Central Australia; Area D: Darling; Area E: East Coast; Area G: North-West Queensland; Area K: Kimberley; Area N: Northern Australia; Area S: Southern Australia; Area TAS: Tasmania; Area To: Torres Strait; Area W: West Australia; Area Y: Cape York.

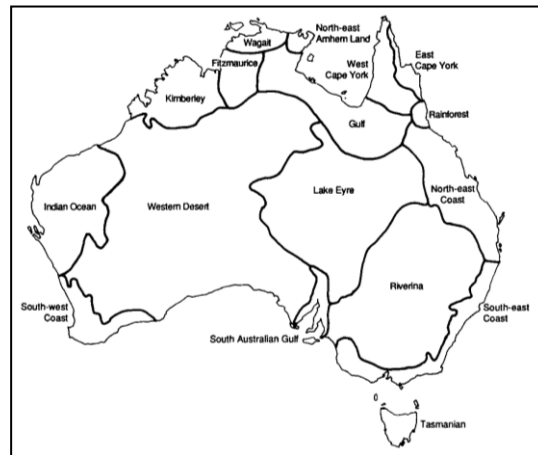
(Meehan, Betty with Bona, Joan. *National Inventory of Aboriginal Artefacts*. Australian Museum and Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Sydney, N.S.W., 1986.)

It is recognised that the island of **Tasmania** is a distinct or separate cultural area to mainland Australia mainly due to the geographical separation from the mainland over an extended time period. In making this point there is also an acknowledgement of a variety of Aboriginal groups that once existed there.

The identification of **Torres Straits** as a single cultural area presents the same problems of viewing cultures within any designated cultural area as being the same. There is a degree of similarity of cultural aspects within the Torres Straits but due to the different backgrounds of the people on the different islands there is a need to identify a specific island where possible. Because it is important to the Torres Strait Islanders to be seen as a separate and unique group with their own cultures a specific bibliography on this area will be prepared to complement this work.

### ❖ *Map of Regions*

A later and now more commonly used modification of the cultural areas of Australia was presented by Horton (1994). A **Map of Regions** was produced by Horton through AIATSIS in Canberra and a version is presented here as **Figure 4**. The regions identified by Horton reflect a general connection between many drainage boundaries and the location of linguistic boundaries, suggesting a connection between ecological zones and culture areas.

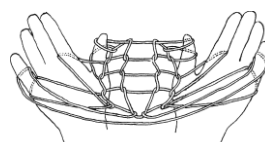


**Figure 4: Map of Regions:** Torres Strait; East Cape Rainforest; Northeast; Riverine; Southeast; Tasmania; Spencer; Eyre; Desert; Southwest; Northwest; Kimberley; Fitzmaurice; North; Arnhem; Gulf; West Cape. Horton, David (ed.) *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Vol. 1 and 2. Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 1994.

### ❖ *Use of Cultural Areas*

Some scholars have argued that the natural divisions caused by major drainage basins underlie the development of 'regional' distinctions within language groups. However, this model does not readily apply in all areas of Australia. Just as it is unwise to generalise about a single Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture there is not a strong case to argue that the cultural areas necessarily represent the same or similar cultural practices.

Because many artefacts and other information had been already been identified by museums using the **Cultural Areas Map** it was decided to continue with this general identification tool. It also proved to be easier to use than the **Map of Regions** and it avoided the need to attempt to convert information from one system to the other.



## Torres Strait Region

The word 'Torres' comes from the name of the Dutch explorer Luis Vaez de Torres who sailed through the area in 1606. The people are collectively identified as a distinct cultural group based around sea and market-garden economies. The identification of Torres Straits as a single cultural area presents the same problems as the other cultural areas in Australia due to the different backgrounds of the people on the different islands. Each clan and island group can be seen to have their own customs as well as sharing some common aspects with other cultural groups.

- **Inhabited islands in the Torres Strait region and communities on Cape York:**

There are currently 17 inhabited islands in the Torres Strait Island region which lies between the mainlands of Papua New Guinea and Australia. Torres Strait Islander communities are now also present at Bamaga and Seisia on the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula.

### **Eastern Islands** (mostly remnant volcanic landforms and home to the Meriam people)

<b>Mer</b>	Murray Island [Murray group Maer (Mer), Diwar, Waier]
<b>Erub</b>	Darnley Island
<b>Ugar</b>	Stephen or Stephens Island

### **Central Islands** (small, low sand cays surrounded by coral reefs and peopled by the Kulkulgal)

<b>Iama</b>	Yam or Turtle-backed Island
<b>Masig</b>	Yorke Island
<b>Warraber</b>	Sue Island
<b>Puruma (or Poruma)</b>	Coconut Island

### **Western Islands** (high granite islands, a continuation of the Australian dividing range and home to the Kaurareg, an Aboriginal people, and the Mulalgal, who are Torres Strait Islanders )

<b>Badu</b>	Mulgrave Island
<b>Moa</b> Community]	St Pauls (Banks) Island [villages are Kubin and St Paul's
<b>Mabuiag</b>	Jervis Island
<b>Waiben (or Waben)</b>	Thursday
<b>Kiriri (or Keriri)</b>	Hammond Island
<b>Narupai (or Ngurupai)</b>	Horn Island
<b>Muralag</b>	Prince of Wales Island

### **Northern Islands** (formed by silt deposited from coastal Papuan rivers and inhabited by the Saibaigal)

<b>Saibai</b>	Saibai Island
<b>Boigu</b>	Talbot Island
<b>Dauan</b>	Mt. Cornwallis Island

### **Cape York Communities** (mainland of Australia communities established during World War II)

**Bamaga**  
**Seisa**

## Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Identity

Torres Strait Island people believe that the cultural practices which they call 'Island Custom' (*Ailan Kastom*)<sup>1</sup> distinguish them from other peoples and link them to ancestors who inhabited the islands before the coming of Europeans. Because Torres Strait Islanders were not dispossessed of all of their land certain aspects of *Ailan Kastom* were able to survive and develop. Even so, the Torres Strait Islands have always been influenced by interregional interactions between Papua New Guineans, other Torres Strait Islanders and Australian Aboriginals. Later the people were also required to accommodate and adapt to influences from the other groups such as Pacific Islanders and Europeans.

***Torres Strait Island cultures are distinct from Aboriginal cultures and have a degree of difference between different groups within Torres Strait Islands.*** There is not a homogenous Torres Strait Island culture. The customs of one group are not the customs of all.

The strong association of Torres Strait Islander people to a particular island often sees their identification to their 'Island home.' A Torres Strait Islander might, for example, be seen as a Mer (Murray) Islander. On the island of Saibai people refer to themselves collectively as *Saibaigal* meaning 'Saibai's people,' or in the singular *Saibailayg*, meaning 'Saibain person' in the local language of *Kala Kawa Ya* (KKY).

Although people identify with a 'home' island in informal conversations it is usually a surname that indicates a persons' origin or family ties and there is no need to specify the island. In many cases on the 'larger' islands the family name can even indicate where a person lives on that island, whether as part of a particular district, village or family group. On some islands there are some cultural 'tensions' and differences between districts and families. For Torres Strait Islander people their place of 'belonging' and the specific knowledge and cultural practices connected with it have a special significance in that it also reinforces their group and individual identity. The general identification with a particular area and a 'home' island for many people can also mean more than one island or 'special' place due to shared cultural identity through intermarriage.

Even today, a great many Torres Strait Island people remain connected to a dynamic cultural heritage of their homeland by particular attitudes, beliefs, values, customs and practices. For example, Torres Strait Island people living on the mainland often have a strong social and emotional attachment to their place of origin and many seek to maintain their culture. This maintenance of cultural identity, even by generations removed from direct association with the Torres Strait Island region, is seen as important. In places on the Australian mainland, such as the cities of Cairns and Townsville, there are significant populations of Torres Strait Islander people from the different islands who observe their own cultural practices and codes of social interaction separate from other Torres Strait Islander groups and individuals. They have also developed sub-cultures that represent their traditional roots and reflect their present values and lifestyles.

**1.** 'Ailan Kastom' combines strong elements of Christianity and traditional values associated regulated by senior men and organised through totemic clan membership. It was based on kinship and reciprocal obligation.



## Definition of Traditional Games

The term *traditional games* now is commonly used worldwide to describe aspects of the 'traditional' or 'culturally relevant' play and movement cultural heritage or cultural expressions of identifiable cultural groups. However, the use of the term as a general concept may misrepresent the differences in the structure, function and meaning of play and movement expressions in and between cultural groups. To overcome any uncertainty all the play and movement expressions found within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are viewed in their widest possible way.

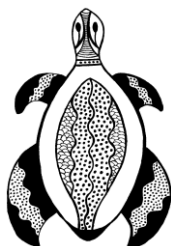
To more precisely reflect the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context an attempt has been made to outline a definition which specifically considers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The definition presented draws significant elements from the definition of *folklife* outlined by the *Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia* (1987).

A proposed definition for traditional games within the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context is:

**Traditional games includes all aspects of traditional and contemporary *play and movement expressions* that are, or have been, developed, repeated and shared informally and/or formally within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and its identifiable present-day cultural groups or communities, and are generally accepted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as being a part of, and/or an adequate reflection of their social identity.**

Before white settlement in 1788 there was a great variety of traditional games undertaken (as part of play and movement expressions) and integrated into the wider culture of the various groups. The traditional games of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** investigated were those found throughout Australia, whether on the Australian continent, the large 'island' of Tasmania or the region designated as the Torres Strait Islands. It is accepted that further research may well determine the need not only for a refined definition but the possibility of different definitions to represent the cultural differences that occur between the cultures of **Aboriginal Australians peoples** and that of **Torres Strait Islander peoples**.

The definition proposed has resisted the temptation to restrict its terms of reference to traditional games that already existed or had their origin *before or during the process of colonisation*. The definition seeks to embrace the view that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are *ongoing* and will always have some transformation.





## Various Accounts of Traditional Games from the Torres Strait Islands

### 4. Games of imitation.

Here as elsewhere children delight in imitating the occupations of their elders, and this mimicry forms a not unimportant part of their education. That this was so in the past is evident from the injunction of lads at initiation in Tutu to abstain in future from playing with play canoes and toy spears. Not only are models of canoes still made for boys to play with (*Album*, I. pl. 346, No. 9), but I have seen in Mer fully rigged models of luggers and schooners with which the young men amused themselves, and the spirit of emulation was gratified by racing one against another (cf Holmes, p. 283).

Mabuiag children play a catching game called *udai (wadai)* or *damadiai*; the former is the red flat bean of a *Mucuna*, the latter is a hard fruit that comes from New Guinea. Boys and girls go in pairs into the sea, a boy tries to throw a bean to another boy which his partner attempts to intercept; should she succeed she in her turn throws it to another girl and her partner tries to forestall her.

### 7. String Figures and Tricks.

String figures, *wome* (W.), *kamut* (E.), allied to our cat's-cradle, are universally played by the children and sometimes by adults, but it seems to be dying out. Usually one person plays it alone, in some cases using the toes as well as the fingers, and often bringing the mouth into requisition. The patterns are very varied, and many are extremely complicated in manipulation although the final result may be simple. They are all intended to be realistic; in some cases the object represented is obvious, in others the imagination must be called into play, by other natives invariably recognise them and different islanders make the same figures. There are a large number of undescribed figures in addition to those described below, among which may be mentioned; one child; two children; a woman micturating; coition; a dog; crow *korkor* (W.); the *pearaku* fish; a small fish, *zermoi* (W.), which accompanies sharks; a crayfish, *kaiar* (W.); the larva of the ant-lion, *gobai* (W.); a mouth *gud* (W.); liana or other climber, *ngal ngal* (W.). The names of the various islands are given where we obtained the figures, but doubtless they occur everywhere in the Straits.

Haddon, A.C. 'Chapter XVII. Games and Toys'. In Haddon, A.C., Quiggin, A. Hingston., Rivers, W.H.R., Ray, S.H., Myers, C.S. and Bruce, J. (eds), *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits: Volume IV. Arts and Crafts*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 1912: (313)-341.

As for sports, Edor, Tig, is the main game. Two parties, women versus men, and the rubbing play.

Two men would hold a woman and paint or paste her with flour. Three to four women would hold a fellow and do the same.

I remember my cousin and I chased a girl and she got into her house and locked it. It was a grass house. A couple of bumps from us and the door went down. We got her painted. We fixed the door the next day.

Another sport was the fearsome Alag. These Alags are supposed to be devils who went about eating people. That is exactly what the person, or persons, would do when acting as Alags. One could guess what the people would do - run helter skelter.

Lowah, T. *Eded Mer (My Life)*. Rams Skull Press, Kuranda, Qld., 1988.

The children would be lined up on the beach and had races to the water. They also had races on their hands up the main street for 50 yards or so.

Schomberg, Neil. *Angels in Paradise: True Stories and Incidents of the Torres Strait from August 1921 to February 1936*. [n.p.], 1992: 57.

**Traditional String Figures from Saibai Island, Torres Strait.** Performed by Francis Abai born 1932 and Kala Waia, born 1926, from Saibai.

Once a very popular pastime on the Torres Strait Islands string figures (Western Island “wame”; Eastern Islands “kamut”) have become exceedingly rare. During my field work on the islands I still could record on tapes a few little songs and ditties which formerly accompanied the string-figures but the actual performance of “wame” I could only witness on the islands of Saibai and Dauan the latter being to a considerable extent “colonised” from the Saibai shortly before the turn of the century. The string figures on both islands therefore are the same.

Doing mainly musical recording I had stayed on Saibai for some time until I asked people to sing some “wame” songs for my musical collection. Only then a few youngsters started also performing them to show me what the figures looked like. The song of which I had recorded. At Dauan the same thing happened again and there even stimulated a considerable interest which led to the young folks carrying strings around their necks and discussing and showing each other string-figures in hours of leisure. Strangely enough, neighbouring Boigu Island had very little to offer in this field, and it was even difficult to get a couple of “wame” songs there.

On Murray Island, in the eastern group, where traditions generally still are so well remembered, I could obtain a number of “kamut wed” or string figure songs but even elderly people could not show the figures anymore. On the rest of the Torres Strait Islands the knowledge of this game is practically lost.

Laade, K.W. and Maude, H.C. *Wame: Traditional String Figures from Saibai Island, Torres Strait (performed by Francis Abai, born 1932 and Kala Waia, born 1926, from Saibai) <film transcript: MS 969>.* Laade Collection. AIATSIS, Canberra, A.C.T., 1967: 1.

These specimens were obtained by the Rev. S. McFarlane, on Murray Island, in Torres Straits, lat. 9 degrees, 55 degrees S; long. 144 degrees 2'E. Mr. McFarlane has been for many years a missionary in New Guinea, and has visited and lived among most of the tribes of the islands of Torres Straits, of the mainland near the Baxter and Fly Rivers, as well as those of the South-eastern peninsula towards China Straits. He is, therefore, eminently qualified to speak of the habits of the savages of this part of the world. He tells me that these tops are undoubtedly made and used by the natives of Murray Island, although tops are not common toys among the Papuans.

As far as I can gather from Mr. McFarlane, these tops are used simply as toys, much as in our own country, and I did not understand that they were either the means of gambling, nor were they employed in any other special manner. With regard to their use I can therefore, find little to say.

The making of them, however, must have been a tedious operation, upon which a considerable amount of time, was expended.

Read, C.H. 'Stone Spinning Tops from Torres Strait, New Guinea'. *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1887: 85-90.

2/5/49

May page 17

Hockey, much modified when I'm not present, is producing a crop of cracked shins and battered heads - very enthusiastic.

MacFarlane, Philip H. *Six years in Torres Strait, 1948-1954: St. Paul's Mission, Moa Island.* MacFarlane Collection. AIATSIS, Canberra, A.C.T., 1949: 17.

At a certain time of the Year this beach would be alive with people who took part in or watched a game: the Alag Segur.

There is some contention as to the exact nature and intention of the original Alag Sesur as it has been some time since it was performed ... The Alag Sesur was a ceremony or play which usually happened about June/July to begin with the time when the wongai (native Plum) would start to ripen. It was a type of fun play or game which was enacted as a thanksgiving for a good harvest of food.

Teske, T. and Thaiday, S. *Darnley. Island of Torres Strait. Far Northern Schools Development Unit, Thursday Island, Qld., 1987.*

They played numerous games. Jack McLaren in 1923 watched them engaging in diving matches, underwater races, competitions as to who could remain longest below, swim diving, and having splashing matches like children do; and no doubt such aquatic games were common in the old days too.

One of their most popular games was a ball game played with the fruit of the kai tree, replaced later by a palm-leaf ball introduced by the South Sea Islanders. This game was always played to song. If anyone dropped the ball he was jeered at. They also played hide and seek, stick throwing, bow and arrow shooting, and tops.

The top-spinning competitions were very serious affairs indeed. Inter-village matches were a feature and were taken at least as seriously as, say, bowls is in New South Wales. There were different kinds of tops; one kind was made from the Queensland bean. The game was a game of great skill. Tops were spun by friction from the palm of the hand and often went for twenty-five minutes or more at one go.

Then there were string games, something along the lines of the cat's cradles of our childhood only much more complicated. They made string figures of fish, spears, birds' nests, fences, sea snakes, crabs, the setting sun, and many more.

Peel, G. *Isles of the Torres Straits: an Australian responsibility. Current Book Distributors, Sydney, N.S.W., 1947.*

Some of the smaller children started a game to show me. There was a ring traced in the sand and cowrie shells laid out in it, and the kids in turn thumb-flicked other small cowries at these or at each others shells ... A spiral univalve that was very common in various colours and patterns often replaces the cowries, more suitably as being almost perfect spheres: the lust for winning did not seem at all decreased by the fact that losers could collect another score or more of 'marbles' in a few minutes from the inexhaustible beach. But rounders dominated, the girls throwing as cleanly and accurately as the boys.

Raven-Hart, R. *The Happy Isles. Georgian House, Melbourne, Vic., 1949: 16*

They are very expert in archery ... Their astonishing adroitness can only be attributed to their being accustomed to this exercise from their early youth. Even the boys when very young, amuse themselves, shooting with bows and arrows, suitable for their strength ... The bows are made of split bamboo, and so strong that no man in the ship could bend one of them. The string is a broad slip of cane, fixed to one end of the bow, and fitted with a noose, to go over the other end, when strung. The arrow is a cane about four feet long, into which a pointed piece of hard heavy *casuarina* wood is firmly fitted, and some of them are barbed.

Wemyss, Thomas. *Narrative of the melancholy shipwreck of the ship 'Charles Eaton' and the inhuman massacre of the passengers and crew with an account of the rescue of two boys from the hands of the savages, in an island in Torres Straits. W.B. Robinson, London, U.K., 1837:22-23.*

At the minor feasts, which are usually held to celebrate such events as a birthday, baptism or the blessing of a dinghy, community games are held instead of a dance. The games vary but may include one of the following team sports: volleyball, soccer, football or basketball. The team games of idha, markay (a version of 'tiggy') and way are also popular. Stomey pley ('hide and seek') is a gender based game, planned in secret by members of one sex and then sprung on the members of the opposite sex. The organisers hide all manner of foodstuffs around the village, ring the village bell and loudly sing the song associated with the game. At that point the members of the opposite sex leave what they are doing and gleefully begin the task of locating the items. The organisers give clues in their song in which places on the island are mentioned. When the others find any items, they emit whoops of delight and playfully taunt the elders with their finds. All the goods are placed in one spot and then used in a small feast, which is usually held the following day.

Fuary, Maureen Majella. 'In So Many Words: an ethnography of life and identity on Yam Island, Torres Strait'. Ph.D. thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1991: 244.

At various seasons of the year, the Murray Islanders practise their own particular pastimes and recreations. For a couple of months, an exciting pastime is what the natives call Kolap spinning the stone tops that are peculiar to the Eastern Islanders. It is a recreation in which the men take chief part; but the women and girls also join in, not only as keen spectators ... The top itself is of stone, beautifully shaped, about nine inches in diameter usually, although smaller ones may be seen. The upper surface is flat, the underpart convex. A polished wooden aft, or spindle, eighteen inches or so in length, pierces the centre; this is twirled by the operator between the palms of the hands as he sits.

On the upper surface of the kolap is usually a painted representation of the tribe to which the owner belongs. A crocodile indicates that he belongs to the "Kadal" people; the picture of shark shows that he is a "Beizam" man; a turtle is the sign of the "Waru" men, a dog that of the "Ome" people, and so on.

The tops are greatly valued, and are handed down from father to son. Each top is carefully kept in a specially-made basket, which, when not in use, is placed in a safe position within the grass-and-coc-onut-leaf house ... On the afternoon of a contest, players arrive at the appointed spot from their respective villages, each carrying the basket in which his kolap reposes. A cleared space has been prepared beneath the coco-nut palms, and the contestants seat themselves a half-circle, with spectators behind; or for variation may group in twos. Cigarettes have first to be rolled, of course; and there is much fun and banter between players and lookers-on. Then little pieces of broken baler-shell, or part of an old plate, or something else with a smooth surface, are produced, and, laced on the sandy ground with as much care as a golfer uses when preparing a tee. A few trial runs are made, and then at signal the contest begins. Slowly at first the hands work up a down the spindle, then more rapidly, until presently the top revolving steadily. When full momentum has been gained, the hands are withdrawn, and the tops continue to rotate, while anxious eyes watch their performance. They will keep going for quite a long time—I have timed them to thirty-five minutes.

MacFarlane, W.H. *The Stone Top Spinners of Torres Strait*. *Walkabout*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1937: 45-47.

### Favourite games song words (part only)

These are the things we do outside  
These are the games that we play  
Sometimes we play in the rain  
Sometimes we play when its muddy  
Sometimes the sun shines very bright  
When the sky is blue and white

[Contact Inc.]. *Favourite Games: Erub (Darnley) Island [sound file and text files]* <website>. Contact Inc., Youth Arts and Cultural Development, Viewed 25 October 2003 <<http://www.contact.org.au/torres.html>>.

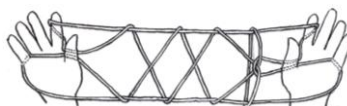
Childhood is by no means solely a time given to instruction: children, especially the younger ones, typically pass most of the day in play. The size and composition of the play group varies with the local residence patterns, but at least one companion is usually available, and ties of friendship may be forged that last into adulthood. In most areas a wide choice of diversions is available.

Both the sea and the bush offer numerous amusements and, simultaneously, the opportunity to practise hunting, paddling canoes, and other useful skills. Formal and elaborate games, accompanied by rhymes, are often performed, particularly on moonlit nights. During the day children romp and scuffle, dance and sing, and imitate adult activities—playing house or pig-hunt, engaging in a ceremonial exchange, carrying out an elaborate mortuary rite. They may also pretend to be the evil spirits and witches whom they genuinely fear at night. Certain games and toys are particularly common: stilts of half-coconut shells, leaf whirligigs and puzzles, spinning tops made of a fruit pierced with a stick, swings of bark loops or vines, string figures (cat's cradle), contests in which darts are thrown at a rolling disc and, in a few coastal areas, surfboards. Perhaps because they usually have real babies to play with, little girls rarely own a doll, but girls too young to be trusted with an infant sometimes carry around an object such as a smooth stone or a stick and treat it as a baby.

Some games such a mock combat with miniature weapons and shooting at insects with toy bows, or preparing meals on improvised hearths, definitely train for adulthood. So, in different ways, do riddles and guessing games. The children, while amusing themselves, acquire physical skills and manual dexterity and may exercise their imaginations and develop social awareness.

They are bound to learn standards of interpersonal behaviour: perhaps that the strong can bully the weak, perhaps that co-operation is necessary if the games and enterprises are to be successful and enjoyable. Boys typically continue to pass their days in play until adolescence, roaming in groups, while the growing girl gradually spends more time helping her mother with the work of the household and has less and less opportunity for diversions with her contemporaries.

Allen, J. and Corris, P. (eds). *The Journal of John Sweatman: a nineteenth century surveying voyage in north Australia and Torres Strait*. University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Qld., 1977.





## Research on Traditional Games in the Torres Strait Islands

It is difficult to generalise about the traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people given the diversity of cultures that were, and still are, evident. The total amount of information on play and movement cultures in Australia is extensive and written accounts date from the European colonisation in 1788 to the present day. Accounts vary from small pieces of information to more detailed descriptions and explanations.

Rather than attempt to outline the work of various the observers and recorders a short outline of the two most significant contributors to knowledge about the Torres Strait are outlined – these people are Alfred Haddon and Margaret Lawrie. The vast amount of information in the collections of Haddon and Lawrie provides for opportunities to study in more detail the unique traditional games of the Torres Strait Islands.

### *Alfred Cort Haddon*

Alfred Cort Haddon is closely associated with his extensive work in the Torres Strait Islands during 1888-89 and as leader of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition of 1898-99. In his first visit Haddon intended to focus on marine biology but became interested in the people and their traditions and collected a huge amount of material on the cultures of the Torres Strait Islands, mostly on the island of Mer (Murray) with some other work on islands such as Saibai. This work was produced in six reports completed between the years 1902-35. In one of his books (Haddon 1912), *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits: Volume 4, Arts and Crafts*, Haddon included a chapter on 'Games and Toys'. Although this chapter is specifically on games and toys elsewhere in his reports there are numerous references to traditional games in the legends, religious and other cultural practices. The over 1000 objects and various other materials collection by Haddon and his team are mostly housed in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. Included in the Haddon Collection are a number of toys and playthings.

Haddon, A.C. 'Chapter XVII. Games and Toys'. In Haddon, A.C., Quigg, A. Hingston., Rivers, W.H.R., Ray, S.H., Myers, C.S. and Bruce, R. (eds), *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits: Volume IV. Arts and Crafts*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 1912: (313)-341.

### *Margaret Lawrie*

Margaret Lawrie trained as a teacher but after her marriage she lived on a cattle property near Rockhampton in Queensland. In 1964, along with social worker Peg Wiley and Aboriginal poet and activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) she was involved in reporting on child health and education in Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait communities. Lawrie developed a good relationship with the people and it became aware of the loss of certain traditions. She later returned to collect the folk tales of the Torres Strait Islanders on their behalf. Her great interest in the people and the area led to the publication in 1970 of *Myths and Legends of Torres Strait* and *Tales from Torres Strait published in 1972*. Lawrie collected materials between 1964 and 1973.

In 1988 Lawrie undertook to donate her research notes and other collected information to the John Oxley Library of the State Library of Queensland. After some early efforts by Lawrie this has been organised as The Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. Included in the materials are films, photographs, drawings, descriptions, language lists, songs and other materials that relate to the games and pastimes of Torres Strait Island peoples. In 2008 the collection of all of Lawrie's materials was included as part of the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register.

Lawrie, Margaret. *Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material <List of Contents for manuscript TR1791>*. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. Brisbane, Qld., 2003.

## Bibliography Overview

The bibliography is designed to provide a comprehensive outline of sources of available information related to the *traditional games* of **Torres Strait Islander** people in Australia. It is recognised that there may be errors and omissions and it should be seen as a work in progress despite an attempt to be as accurate as possible.

The entries in the bibliography provide both *primary and secondary sources* and the information ranges from passing or brief references to much more detailed descriptions.

### ❖ Sections of the Bibliography

The information reviewed included a large amount of written material, information gained from interviews, films, photos and information about toy and plaything artefacts. The information collected has been organised under various sections:

- **WRITTEN MATERIALS**
- **ARTEFACTS**
- **ARTWORK**
- **FILMS**
- **PHOTOGRAPHS**
- **SOUND**

- **WRITTEN MATERIALS**

This section includes books, book sections, manuscripts, reports, booklets, journal articles and other scholarly work such as theses, newspaper and magazine articles. The different types of work have not been sub-divided into different areas.

- **ARTEFACTS**

Most of the entries in this section are concerned with artefacts which have been identified as toys and playthings related to the Torres Strait.

- **ARTWORK**

Examples of original artwork and relevant artistic depictions were identified and entered either under written materials or as a separate entry (as in the case of individual pieces of artwork within manuscript collections).

- **FILMS**

There are a number of films wholly about traditional games or films that contain parts dealing with traditional games in the Torres Strait. This section outlines the films that have been identified as being associated with various aspects of traditional games in the Torres Strait Island region.

- **PHOTOGRAPHS**

This section outlines slides and photographs which are related to traditional games. Not all slides and photographs that were researched are recorded individually.

- **SOUND**

The sound recording of interviews which contain some reference to traditional games relies to a large extent on the listings available in the AIATSIS (Canberra) catalogue along with a few other sources.

## ❖ **Scope of the Bibliography and Format**

The format style for the presentation of this bibliography is largely based on the AGPS system with the place of publication and the year of publication as the final pieces of information. This is the general requirement within History Departments at some Australian universities. There are a couple of minor modifications used in this particular bibliography which are intended to make for greater consistency and clarity.

### ○ **Standard reference entries:**

The references are listed by author, title, publisher, place and year, page number(s) – if applicable. For example,

Haddon, A.C. 'Chapter XVII. Games and Toys'. In Haddon, A.C., Quiggin, A. Hingston., Rivers, W.H.R., Ray, S.H., Myers, C.S. and Bruce, R. (eds), *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits: Volume IV. Arts and Crafts*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 1912: (313)-341.

Hall, B. 'The Eastern Isles'. *Walkabout*, vol. 23, no. 12, 1957: 17-19.

Laade, Wolfgang. *Report (to AIAS) on Field Work done by Dr. W. Laade and Mrs. Laade. Part II, Murray Island, Torres Straits, December 16th 1963-March 3rd 1964 <manuscript PMS 960>*. AIATSIS, Canberra, A.C.T., 1964.

## ❖ **Coding System**

Additional information and designations for each reference through a coding system was used to make the entries clearer and potentially more useful. For example,

Lowah, T. *Eded Mer (My Life)*. Rams Skull Press, Kuranda, Qld., 1988.  
# chasing; hide and seek; singing; \* Torres Strait Islands; (Code To).

The coding system adopted attempts to identify each entry in relation to **traditional games keywords**, **geographic location**, **people or group** and a **cultural area**. For example:

### ○ **Traditional Games keywords**

# mimic; sand games; tracking games; toy weapons; throwing - spear, - club; moving target; mock fighting; defending; throwing stick - [weet-weet]; chasing; mock hunting; fishing; hunting; string games; play 'house'; oracle game; drawing; leaf games; hand games;

In cases where a common name was identified this was placed in brackets, for example;

throwing stick - [weet-weet];

In a number of cases an alternative use of a term or word is designated. For example, entries for string figures may have the additional designation;

string games {cat's cradle};

The keywords used for the individual entries are not standardised descriptions and are dependent on the source of information and the interpretation of the information made by the particular coder. In some cases there has been recognition of the 'uniqueness' of a particular source of information. Even so, a conscientious attempt has been made to ensure a high degree of consistency. Many of the sources of information did not allow for



a complete or accurate indication of games or activities but despite this the final product still provides a fairly accurate guide to games to be found in a particular entry.

➤ **Categorising and cataloguing traditional games.**

**Examples of some types of traditional games identified include:**

- skipping games;
- ball games;
- top spinning;
- dodging games;
- string games;
- tracking games;
- hide and seek games;
- throwing games (including spear and boomerang);
- wrestling games;
- imitation games;
- water games;
- mock fighting games;
- hitting games;
- tag games;
- running games; and
- fire games.

The coding system adopted identifies each entry in relation to the **geographic location, people/cultural region or area**. For example:

# traditional games; hockey game; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

A conscientious attempt has been made to ensure a high degree of consistency. Even so, it is recognised that there may be inaccuracies in the **keyword or coded description** for some of the entries. However, this is not seen as detracting from the overall purpose and usefulness of the coding system used in the bibliography.

○ **Geographic location**

The intention of this coding aspect was to refer an entry to an *identified area* where the information was recorded. Often the spelling in the original source has been used but in several references the designated areas have names which make it difficult to identify based on current place names. An entry example:

\* Yam Island; Torres Strait;

○ **People/Cultural Region or Area**

Although there were significant differences between the various societies found in Australia there was some degree of commonality in some cultural practices based on geographical or other factors.

When there was sufficient information available an attempt was made to indicate the *cultural region or area* that the source of information came from.

(Code To)

The entry of **(Code To)** refers to information identified as relevant to parts of the **Torres Straits** region.

## ❖ Bibliography References

Examples of references within the different sections of the bibliography:

- **WRITTEN MATERIALS**

Lawrie, Margaret. *Abi, Francis and Wala, Kala: "Sign language of Saibai Island, Torres Strait". Abai and Waia, Kala: "String figures of Saibai Island, Torres Strait". Annotated by Margaret Lawrie <typescript: TR1791/77>. The Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Island Resources.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1966.  
# Saibai Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

- **ARTEFACTS**

[Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology]. *Toys and playthings <artefacts>.* University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, U.K., 19–.  
# toys and playthings; spinning tops; model canoe; artefacts; \* Australia; Torres Strait; (Code To).

- **ARTWORK**

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Mask Worn by Mothers to Frighten Children, Mer (Murray) Island [with description of its reaction] <pencil drawing: TR1791/240>.* Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.  
# mask; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

- **FILMS**

Sandall, Roger and Laade, Wolfgang (advisor). *Wame: Traditional String Figures from Saibai Island, Torres Strait <film:LF0010 (film), LV3457.02 (video copy)>.* Production, AIAS Film Unit, AIATSIS, Canberra, A.C.T., 1964.  
# Saibai Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

- **PHOTOGRAPHS**

Shnukal, Anna. *Skidel game – Yam Island, Torres Strait <photo 88544 in AIATSIS, Canberra, A.C.T.>. 1982.*  
# skidel game; games; \* Yam Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

- **SOUND**

Beckett, Jeremy (coll.). *String figure song, Torres Strait <sound recording in AIATSIS, Canberra, A.C.T.>. British Library National Sound Archive, London, U.K., 1961.*  
# string figure song; \* Torres Straits; (Code To).



## ❖ **General Comments on the Bibliography**

### ✓ **Terminology**

It is recognised that many of the written materials in the bibliography include the use of words that are now considered inappropriate. It should also be noted that some of these 'offensive' words appear in the title of entries in the bibliography.

Without highlighting these words and terms it should be remembered that as a matter of respect and courtesy they should be avoided or only used in a qualified way. In some cases they should only be used if they appear in quotations or are used by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

### ✓ **Reliability of Information**

It is acknowledged that in many entries in the bibliography the points of view or depictions are not reliable or accurate. A good deal of the information reflects the attitudes of a historical period and the experience or background of individuals in a particular context. Any person using references should be aware of selectively using information from them to support a particular point of view.

### ✓ **Cultural sensitivity**

A significant proportion of the information presented within the entries refers to people who have died and therefore some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may find it distressing. Additionally, some of the entries included in the bibliography outline practices and personal information which could be disturbing or could cause anger to some readers. Care should be taken when using all cultural information to acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of that knowledge.

### ✓ **Torres Strait Islander 'voice'**

A concerted effort was made to seek an 'Indigenous voice' to the information presented by using traditional stories, personal interviews, visits to sites and places and an extensive review of information. In recent years books by Torres Strait Island authors have appeared and these were reviewed for information.



## WRITTEN MATERIALS

'Aboriginalities'. *The Bulletin (Sydney)*, 31 March 1927.

# diving; \* Torres Strait Islands; (Code To).

'Aboriginalities'. *The Bulletin (Sydney)*, 15 December 1937: 20.

# bow and arrow; \* Australia; Torres Strait Islands; New Guinea; (Code To).

'[Abstract of Presidential Address at the late Hobart Science Congress] North Queensland Aboriginals: Games, Sports and Amusements. By Dr. Roth, Protector of Aboriginals Queensland'. *The Observer (Adelaide)*, 1 March 1902: 36.

# story game; Dreamtime; toys; pet; swinging; fire games; leaf games; mud games; sliding; mimic; insect games; ghost game; string games; thinking games; tug-o-war; tracking games; rock art; play 'house'; dolls; mock hunting; toy weapons; mock fighting; wrestling; hide and seek; ball games; moving target; throwing; - spear; - boomerang; - stick; - dart; bat games; cricket; spinning tops; music; dancing; singing; musical instruments; rattles; running; jumping; \* North Queensland; Torres Strait Islands; (Code Y); (Code To); (Code E).

'An Island Paradise. Return of a Sydney Expedition. Augmenting the Museum Collection'. *The Mercury (Hobart)*, 29 October 1907: 7.

# top spinning contests; spinning top; \* Mer Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

'Swimming Notes: some interesting facts about pearl divers'. *The Referee (Sydney)*, 11 July 1894.

# swimming; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

"Akeake". 'Aboriginalities'. *The Bulletin (Sydney)*, 29 March 1933: 21.

# string games; \* Torres Strait Islands; (Code To).

"Maeti". 'Aboriginalities'. *The Bulletin (Sydney)*, 8 March 1933: 21.

# string games; hide and seek; singing games; card games; \* Torres Strait Islands; (Code To).

"Parama". 'Aboriginalities'. *The Bulletin (Sydney)*, 3 May 1923: 22.

# diving; \* Torres Strait Islands; Darnley Island; (Code To).

"Sea Nomad". 'Aboriginalities'. *The Bulletin (Sydney)*, 19 September 1928: 25.

# ceremonies; \* Torres Strait Islands; (Code To).

[Account using information taken from Haddon Expedition]. 'A Torres Strait Islander'. *The Brisbane Courier (Brisbane)*, 5 February 1891: 7.

# childhood; initiation rules with no game playing; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Australian Board of Missions]. 'Aboriginals'.

*Missionary Notes of the Australian Board of Missions*, vol. 94, 1902.

# tug-o-war; canoe races; \* Papua New Guinea; Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Cairns Catholic Education Office]. *Kids of the Torres Strait: Boat Races*. Cairns Catholic Education Office, Cairns, Qld., 1987.

# boat races; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Catholic Education Office]. *Torres Strait Islander Perspective Primary P-7: A New Partnership*. Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Cairns, Qld., Cairns, 1996.

# games; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Chief Protector of Aboriginals]. *Chief Protector's Report*. Queensland Government, Brisbane, Qld., 1910.

# games; \* Torres Strait Islands; (Code To).

[Christine Anu]. 'My Country Childhood: Christine Anu'. *Country Style*, 2010 (Dec.): 32-34.

# dance; play; exploring; swimming; hunting; marble games; tree climbing; fishing; \* Mabuiag Island; Saibai Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland] <Revised and rewritten>. *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*. 6th edn. Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, London, U.K., 1951.

# string games; recording games; \* Torres Strait Islands; (Code To).

[Contact Inc.]. *Contact Inc.: Youth Arts and Cultural Development* <website>. Viewed 4 November 2003.

<<http://www.contact.org.au.htm>>.

# games; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Contact Inc.]. *Favourite Games: Erub (Darnley) Island* [sound file and text files] <website>.

Contact Inc., Youth Arts and Cultural Development, Viewed 25 October 2003.

<<http://www.contact.org.au/torres.html>>.

# traditional games; songs; \* Erub Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Contact Inc.]. *Favourite Games: Mer (Murray) Island* [sound file and text files] <website>.

Contact Inc., Youth Arts and Cultural Development, Viewed 25 October 2003.

<<http://www.contact.org.au/mer/ocean.htm>>.

# traditional games; \* Mer Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health in collaboration with the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and the

Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs]. *Growing up in the Torres Strait Region: A report from the Footprints in Time trials*. Occasional Paper (Australia. Dept. of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) No. 17. Dept. of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, A.C.T., 2006.

# sport; recreation; leisure; cultural practices; childhood; sports facilities; swim; making a ball from a coconut leaf; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[International String Figure Association]. 'Henry Rishbeth & Family, Southampton, England'. *ISFA News: The Official Newsletter of the International String Figure Association*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1996 (Oct.).

# string figures; \* Australia; Torres Strait; (Code To).

[John Oxley Library]. *Print Resource 8: Games of the Torres Strait Islands*. Studies of Society and Environment Child's Play 17. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 2002.

# games; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Poruma Island Resort]. *Poruma Island Resort information <website>*. Viewed 28 March 2011.  
<<http://216.239.57.104/search?q=cache:PohFnRQfTkJ:www.poruma.com/pdf/outbk.pdf+%22Poruma+Island%22+%2B%22games%22&hl=en&ie=UTF-8>>.

# traditional games; swimming; shark playing; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Early Childhood Curriculum Development Unit]. *Hooked on Rhymes: Rhymes and Poems Familiar to Preschool Children in the Torres Strait Islands*. Department of Education Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1989.

# childhood; games; songs; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art]. *The Torres Strait Islands*. Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Qld., 2011.

# recreation; play; dancing; daily life; childhood; art; photograph; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Queensland Department of Education]. *School Inspector's Report, Department of Education*. St. Paul's Moa, Saibai, Marbuaiag, Badu, 1924.

# games; singing; dancing; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Report about Mrs. Zahel]. 'Where a Woman Rules. Life on Torres Strait Island'. *The Sydney*

*Morning Herald (Sydney)*, 28 March 1935: 6.

# marble games as an 'immoral game'; \* Badu Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Thursday Island State High School]. *Culture in Change: Torres Strait history in photographs*. Thursday Island State High School, Thursday Island, Qld., 1988.

# dancing; ghost game; spinning tops; toy canoe; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

[Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]. *Torres Strait Islanders*. Viewed 1 February 2011.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torres\\_Strait\\_Islanders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torres_Strait_Islanders)>.

# traditional games; string figure; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

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## ARTWORK

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Lawrie, Margaret. *Two watercolours: 'Ebur degur' ('naiger kerker segur') flowers and notes on their use in children's games (bird play). Watercolour of 'meriam naur' flowers flowers, leaf and stem and notes on its*

*healing properties <watercolours: 21 August-28 August 1970: TR1791/244>*.

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# ball game; drawing; play; \* Mer island; Eastern Islands; Torres Strait; (Code To).

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# bow and arrow; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Children's Toy Boat, Dauan (Mt Cornwallis) Island, Western Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/227>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material*. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., September 1971.

# toy boat; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

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# children's games; masks; \* Dauan Island; Western Islands; Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Mask used by Alag, Dauan (Mt Cornwallis) Island, Western Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/228>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material*. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., September 1971.

# mask; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: 'Daro biri' made from 'Upius', a Type of Bamboo, Dauan (Mt Cornwallis Island), Western Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/223>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material*. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.

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Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Leaves and Flowers of 'Del' Shrub, Dauan (Mt Cornwallis Island), Western Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/222>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material*. John Oxley

Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.

# drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Leaves, Flowers, Fruit and Seeds of 'Putit' and 'Vidui' Trees. The Seeds are used in Children's Marbles Games, Dauan (Mt Cornwallis) Island, Western Islands <pencil drawing: 1 September 1971: TR1791/221>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., September 1971.

# drawing; play; marble games; \* Dauan Island; Western Islands; Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Pandanus 'Root Baby', Dauan (Mt Cornwallis Island), Western Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/224>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.

# drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: 'Patalai' Vine. The Seeds of this Plant are used in Children's Games, Dauan (Mt Cornwallis) Island, Western Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/220>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.

# drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: 'Buzumarau kapul' used as a ball for game played in the sea by children at Kubin <pencil drawing: TR1791/210>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.

# ball game; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: 'Dikun', Children's Toy Spear, Yam (Turtle-Backed Island), Central Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/212>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.

# toy spear; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: 'Dogai' Mask used for Alag and Dogai Children's Games, Boigu (Talbot Island), Western Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/219>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands*

*Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.

# mask -[dogai]; children's games - chasing; drawing; play; \* Boigu Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Erub (Darnley Island) Children's Loop Game, Yam (Turtle-Backed) Island, Central Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/216>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.

# loop game; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Kai (Cerbera manghas) – fruit used for children's ball games <pencil drawing: 12 May 1972: TR1791/241>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., May 1972.

# ball game; drawing; play; \* Mer island; Eastern Islands; Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: 'Kuzub' Flowers and Leaves, Yam Island – Pelican Play <pencil drawing: TR1791/237>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.

# drawing; pelican play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Mask Worn by Mothers to Frighten Children, Mer (Murray) Island [with description of its reaction] <pencil drawing: TR1791/240>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.

# mask; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: 'Pitar Makar', Cuttlefish Canoe with Thin Old Shell of Turtle use as Sail, Kubin, Moa (Mua or Banks Island) <pencil drawing: TR1791/211>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.

# drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Underside of Pandanus Leaf used for Children's Counting Game, Yam (Turtle-Backed) Island, Central Islands <pencil drawing: TR1791/213>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.

# counting game; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).



- Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Unidentified Plant used for Weaving Garlands, Yam (Turtle-Backed) Island, Central Islands* <pencil drawing: TR1791/217>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.  
# drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Lawrie, Margaret. *Watercolour: Flowers and Fruit of Mangrove (Biu) for Kamu Sagul [children's game], Yam (Turtle-Backed) Island, Central Islands* <watercolour: TR1791/215 on 24 April 1972>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1972.  
# drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Lawrie, Margaret. *Pencil drawing: Passi, Seggar. Sketchbook (35 x 25 cm) with 8 pencil drawings on 6 sheets. Heads of children (2), pipes (2), spinning tops (2), 'darbam' (lizard), 'waipem' (lizard)* <pencil drawing: TR1791/327>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., February 1973.  
# spinning tops; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Lawrie, Margaret and Kabere, A.H. *Sketchbook: drawings mostly of plants and children's toys and games made from seeds, seedpods, leaves and branches. Mer (Murray Island) Eastern Islands and Saibai, Western Islands* <sketchbook 9 April 1971-17 May 1971: TR1791/208>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., May 1971.  
# drawing; grass toys/play; \* Mer (Murray Island); Eastern Islands and Saibai Island; Western Islands; Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Locky Tom. *Watercolour: Two Children Sitting Under a Tree Playing with Spinning Tops. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material* <TR1791/253>. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.  
# spinning tops; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Locky Tom. *Pencil drawing: How to catch a bird from Boigu Island* <pencil drawing: part one TR1791/254; part two TR1791/255; part three TR1791/256 >. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.
- # toy trap; catching birds for game or pets; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Passi, Segar. *Sketchbook: Spinning Tops* <sketchbook: TR1791/327>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1973.  
# spinning tops; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Waia, Kala. *Sketchbook: Pencil sketches of animals and hand string games* <sketchbook: TR1791/41>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 197-.  
# string games; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Waia, Kala. *Watercolour: Nima and Poipii with Binbin from Saibai Island* <watercolour: TR1791/215 on 28 August 1967>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1967.  
# drawing; play; toy boat; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Waia, Kala. *Pencil drawing: Children's String Figure Game* <pencil drawing: TR1791/278>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.  
# string figure; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Waia, Kala. *Pencil drawing: 'Kudu' Children's Toy Canoe* <pencil drawing: TR1791/277>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.  
# toy canoe; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Waia, Kala. *Pencil drawing: Shooting with grass game [children's game from Saibai Island]* <pencil drawing: TR1791/273>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.  
# shooting grass - [boerdth]; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Waia, Kala. *Pencil drawing: Unidentified leaf (Children's Game?)* <pencil drawing: TR1791/273>. Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.  
# leaf game; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).
- Waia, Kala. *Pencil drawing: Weaving "Sawalag" [miniature food container] from Saibai Island* <pencil drawing: TR1791/274>.

*Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material*. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.  
# toy; weaving; drawing; play; miniature food storage container; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

Waia, Kala. *Pencil drawing: Weaving (Children's Toy) <pencil drawing: TR1791/273>*.  
*Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islands Material*. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 1971.  
# toy; weaving; drawing; play; \* Torres Strait; (Code To).

## FILMS

[Australian Board of Missions]. *Island Boy <film>*.  
Australian Board of Missions, Sydney, N.S.W., 19-.  
# play; \* Moa Island; Torres Strait; (Code To).

[National Film and Sound Archive]. *Pearls and Savages. <film in National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, A.C.T.>*. 1921.  
# string game; children playing; childhood; \* Papua New Guinea; Torres Strait; (Code To).

Lawrie, Margaret. *Children's Games: Torres Strait Island films <films: 8mm - DVD copies TR1791/448-462>*. *Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Island Material*. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld., 197-.  
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Kadhow, Yam Island, Torres Strait, Qld [place of origin], 1980 (Dec.).

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## Conclusion

Mabuiag children play a catching game called *udai (wadai)* or *damadiai*; the former is the red flat bean of a *Mucuna*, the latter is a hard fruit that comes from New Guinea. Boys and girls go in pairs into the sea, a boy tries to throw a bean to another boy which his partner attempts to intercept; should she succeed she in her turn throws it to another girl and her partner tries to forestall her.

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**A Bibliography of the Traditional Games of Torres Strait Islander Peoples** has sought to outline accounts of the traditional games of the Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. The information that has been presented has been taken from an extensive review of information on play and movement cultures in Australia which been undertaken over many years. Although designed to be comprehensive the bibliography does not seek to provide any comment on the accuracy of the information included within each of the entries.

It is hoped that the information in this publication may provide additional knowledge and insights about the traditional games of Torres Strait Islander peoples and encourage further research in the area.

**Ken Edwards and Tim Edwards**

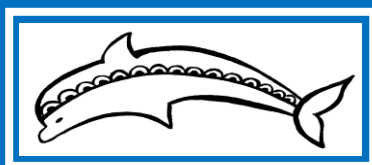
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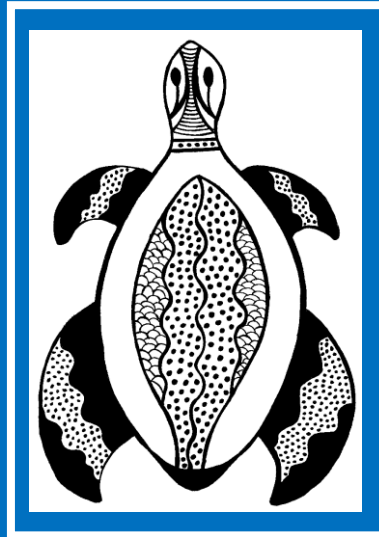








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ISBN 978-0-9872359-1-6



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