



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



# cultural heritage

Map of Queensland

Our story is in that land

The stories are there

We gotta look after the Story-Places, the land, sea-country and islands too

The same way they look after us

By Paddy Bassani and Albert Lakefield with Tom Popp of the Lamalama people

Queensland the Smart State



'We gotta look after the Story-Places ...'

Story-Place on Clack Island (Nguurmo) in the Flinders Island Group (Wurrula).

For more information visit  
[www.aiatsis.gov.au](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au)  
[www.nrw.qld.gov.au/cultural\\_heritage](http://www.nrw.qld.gov.au/cultural_heritage)  
[www.australianarchaeologicalassociation.com.au](http://www.australianarchaeologicalassociation.com.au)

► Bassani, P, Lakefield, A and Popp, T 2006, *Lamalama country: our country: our culture-way*, ed. B Rigby and N Cole, Akito, Brisbane, in assoc. with Arts Queensland, Brisbane.

► Holdaway, S and Stern, N 2004, *A Record in Stone*, Museum of Victoria, Melbourne and Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra.

► Horton, D 1994, *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History, Society and Culture*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra.

ISBN 978-1741723267 This document has been produced in the interests of the public awareness and education. It should be noted that it is an offence under Queensland legislation to cause harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage and substantial penalties apply if harm is caused.  
© The State of Queensland (Department of Natural Resources and Water) 2007. #27759

## Shell middens

Middens are places where Aboriginal people camped. They are usually on a level, sheltered surface close to fresh water or on coastal dunes. Marine or freshwater shells are a major component of middens as Aboriginal people ate shellfish at the sites. Bone, stone and other items are also found on middens. Shell middens are found along coastlines, estuaries, coastal and inland river floodplains and lakes, and range considerably in size.

- 1 (Cz) Large shell mounds at Princess Charlotte Bay, Cape York and Love River, near Weipa. There are at least 500 mounds, ranging from 1–13 m high, the largest containing over 200 000 tonnes of shells (mostly cockles *Anadara granosa*), accumulated from about 1200 years ago.
- 2 (Hr) Mazie Bay on North Keppel Island is nearly 5000 years old. It has layers of shell, bone and stone artefacts separated by sand deposits.
- 3 (Kz) Inland middens containing predominately freshwater mussel shells, with stone artefacts, clay and stone hearths, and European artefacts.

## Weirs and fish traps

Fish traps and weirs designed to catch fish and other aquatic animals were made from rocks, branches or wickerwork. Those that have survived are made of stone and can be found along the length of the Queensland coast. They vary in size and shape. The rock walls acted as a barrier to trap fish, dugong and turtle as the tide receded.

- 4 (Ei) More than 40 surviving fish traps are found between Bayley Point and Moonlight Creek, Gulf of Carpentaria.
- 5 (Ea) 300 fish traps are known in the Wellesley Islands, Gulf of Carpentaria, with particular concentrations on Bentinck, Mornington, Swears, Allen and Forsyth Islands.
- 6 (Fs) A complex arrangement of fish traps is located at Scraggy Point on Hinchinbrook Island. Traps may have been developed in two stages in response to minor changes in sea level.
- 7 (G6) A stone-walled fish trap at Cape Hillsborough, situated between two rocky shorelines. It is 65 m long, 1 m wide and 30 cm high.

## Engravings and paintings

Aboriginal rock art often tells stories and involves rituals that were central to the lives of the people. Art includes paintings, stencils and drawings on a rock surface. Another form of rock art involved engraving surfaces by pecking, grinding and abrading.

Aboriginal art motifs are often geometric, non-figurative symbols, such as circles, lines and dots. Aboriginal art also includes figurative symbols such as human and animal shapes, boomerangs and other tools, and animal tracks. Queensland's major rock art areas are in Lawn Hill National Park, near Laura in Quinkan Country; Flinders Gorge National Park; and throughout the Camarvon area.

- 8 (Hi) Engraving site at Boulia contains 785 motifs with 720 non-figurative designs, mostly variations of circles, and 65 animal tracks.
- 9 (Gi) Brown's Rock, near Mount Isa, comprises weathered engravings that appear to be many thousands of years old. They include large, wheel-like motifs; spirals; animal tracks; curvilinear shapes; and numerous pits or depressions found singly or in rows across the rock face.

## Pathways and travel routes

Travel routes constitute well-defined pathways for traversing traditional country, where particular points mark a neighbouring clan's country.

- 10 (K8) Chalawong, (meaning Currawong bird) the only known rock engraving site in South East Queensland, has great cultural significance for the Jagara Aboriginal people. Most of the art consists of circles, drilled holes or cupules, lines, tally marks and bird tracks. Steps and a boardwalk have been constructed at the rockshelter to protect the soft sandstone.
- 11 (K7) A painting site at Maidenwell, Bunya Mountains consisting of red and orange drawings of connecting lines, barred lines and circles, and lines and connecting arcs.
- 12 (Ea) Tully Falls to Kareeya and the Lower Tully River.
- 13 (Jz) Pathway passing over the crest of a ridge.

## Rockshelters

Rockshelters served as lookouts and places to rest and avoid the sun and rain. People sometimes lived in rockshelters near water and some have significant importance for Aboriginal people. Shelters act as natural sediment traps, and stratified deposits containing remains of food scraps and fires are often found.

- 14 (Ea) Ngarrabullagan Cave, Mount Mulligan—a 35 cm-deep deposit, layered with 27 distinct strata. Dated at over 37 000 years old, it is the oldest site in Queensland.

## Dwellings

Shelters or gunyahs of various types were common across Queensland, however, as they were made of sticks and bark, few have survived. Nevertheless, they can be found in parts of western Queensland.

## Contact sites

In northern Australia, Aboriginal people had early contact with Macassan fishermen from Indonesia, and French and Dutch mariners in the 1600s. In the 1800–1900s, they had contact with Chinese people who came to work on the goldfields and South Sea Islanders. The journals and records of explorers and pioneer settlers provide sources of information for these sites.

- 15 (A3) The Tree of Wisdom—a large fig tree believed to be over 100 years old—has been a principal meeting place for the Erub (Darnley) people.
- 16 (Fs) Islander camp, 1 km north-east of Halifax is significant to both South Sea Islanders and Aboriginal groups.

## Quarries

Quarries are places from which Aboriginal people extracted raw materials such as stone or ochre.

- 17 (G4) Lake Moondarra Quarry is one of the largest in Queensland (6 square kilometres in area) and includes well-preserved axe heads, grindstones and spearheads, worked by members of the Kalkadood group.
- 18 (G6) Quarry on South Molle Island dated at around 8000 BP (before present). It contains rock that is hard, black volcanic basalt—ideal for making ground-edge axes.
- 19&20 (H2) Small silcrete quarries.

## Grinding grooves

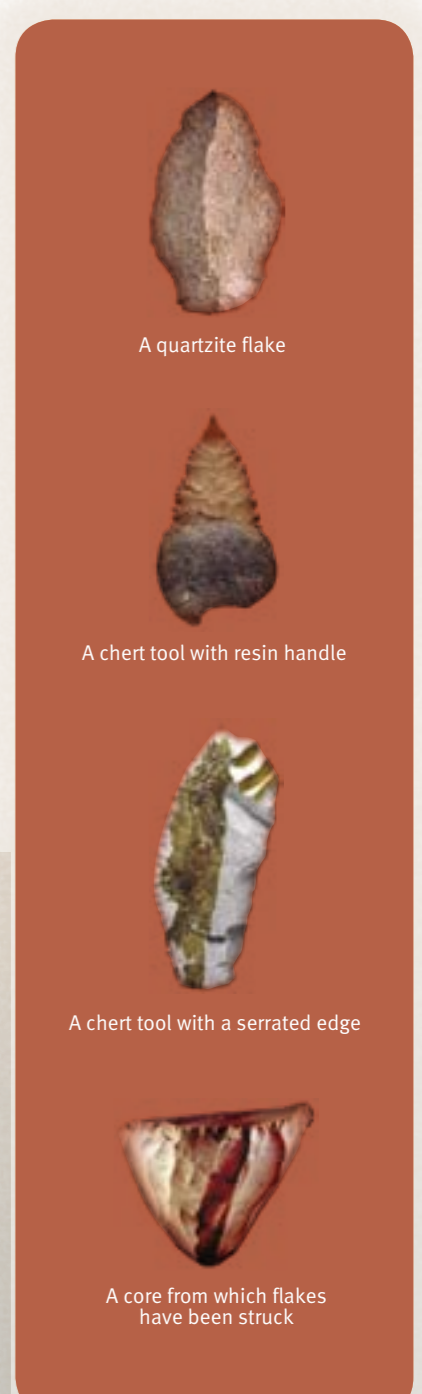
Grinding grooves are formed when ground stone axes or adzes are made. People ground stones against a rock surface (usually sandstone) and the grooves that resulted have their own patina, are narrow, relatively short (about 15 cm) and are deeper in the middle (about 2 cm). They were used to sharpen wooden spear points and to grind seed and other organic matter.

- 21 (F3) Rock shelter with deposits, rock art and around 13 axe grinding grooves.
- 22 (E4) Fourteen deep grooves in hard black metamorphic rock.
- 23 (K8) Fifty concave depressions worn into three separate sections of exposed sandstone (approx. 30–35 cm long and 10 cm wide) at Little Rocky Creek, Landsborough.

## Stone artefact scatters

Aboriginal people made tools and utensils from wood, bark, skins and fibres, but very few remain. Stone tools, however, have survived for centuries, and numbers of stone artefacts are commonly found in areas called artefact scatters. Stone cores from which flakes and blades have been struck are also found in these locations.

- 24 (E3) Artefact scatter of cores and flakes—quartz, chert, silcrete and rhyolite—near a source of red ochre, which was used for painting.
- 25 (G4) Boulders up to 900 mm across have been flaked and there is a scatter of flakes and cores at densities of 5–20 per square metre in this metavolcanic quarry.
- 26 (K8) A scatter of 35 artefacts on a creek bank including flakes and cores of chert quartzite and silcrete.



Photos of stone artefacts. Courtesy of Simon Hollaway and Nicola Stern

## Story places and cultural sites

These include modified sites and/or natural features of the landscape that possess special significance because of their role in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander beliefs. They may be part of a creation story or associated with mythological beings and legends, and important life events and ceremonies. Some sites are known only by people who have been told the relevant stories by local elders. Birthplaces hold special significance to Aboriginal people and are important means of demonstrating association with country.

- 27 (E4) An increase site in Trinity Inlet where local clans would sing and dance at full moon in the winter to enhance the fertility of mud crabs.
- 28 (L4) Rainstone Mountain is known to the Kunja people as an area where the rocks have mythical powers to bring rain, usually a day or two after they gathered special stones and ochre, and danced.
- 29 (J6) Lake Nuga Nuga is the site of a male and female Rainbow Serpent story and also the place of Eunjie, the malevolent water spirit.

## Earthen and stone arrangements

Aboriginal people created arrangements of stones, ranging from simple cairns or piles of stones, to elaborate circles and pathways covering large areas. These arrangements and earthen circles are usually associated with initiations and religious ceremonies. Earthen circles usually consist of bare areas of ground surrounded by roughly circular, low mounds.

- 30 (G1) Dreaming site, from which the Rainbow Serpent was chased by a little brown bird with white spots under its wings to Wooded Rockhole, between Mistake Bore and Pomegranate Bore and then to Boulia. It can still be seen at Boulia after the big wet.
- 31 (I7) Ban Ban Springs Dreaming Place is of great significance to the Wakka Wakka people. Formed by the Creator Spirits who brought the water to the springs, it is the home of the Rainbow Serpent, a ceremonial site relating to birth, rites of passage and initiation, and was the first site to be entered on the register of the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*.
- 32 (L8) Jabreen Dreaming Place. Massive basalt columns overlook the sea, which is the focal point of the mythological creation of Jellurgul (Burligh Mountain) and the surrounding countryside.

## Hearths

Hearths are the ash and charcoal remains of ancient campfires and earth ovens, and are often found near fresh water, on the plains of western Queensland.

- 33 (A3) Stone-bounded plots and pathways, stone cairns and stone-lined drainage systems connected with horticulture on Yam Island in the Torres Strait.
- 34 (F4) Stone circle comprising 63 slabs of sandstone, approximately 12 m in diameter, with a small stone slab centre—an important ceremonial ground.
- 35 (K8) Samford bora rings—a large and small earth-banked circle connected by a pathway.

## Wells

These are small natural depressions or cavities in rock outcrops that collect water after rain.

- 36 (G2) A naturally occurring rock hole, 2 x 3 x 0.5 m deep, identified by Yulluna traditional owners from Kalkadood country as a significant water source.
- 37 (K6) A rock well just off the Moonie Highway adjacent to 28 axe-grinding grooves. The water may have been used for drinking or as a lubricant in grinding stones.

## Settlements and missions

Private citizens and Christian organisations established these Aboriginal settlements under the *Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*.

- 43 (K8) Deebing Creek mission and cemetery, regarded by the Ugarpaal Elders as a place of major significance.

## Caches

Caches or hiding places for items such as pendants, ochre, string, pouches, hair, blankets and bone points, have been found throughout Queensland along with collections of seed pods from zamias and kurrajongs. Stone axes were also sometimes cached for later use.

## Police and contact camps

Aboriginal camps were found on the outskirts of towns, on stations, where Aboriginal people had a reasonable relationship with the Europeans; and in remote areas, where people could maintain a traditional lifestyle or use natural resources such as waterholes or swamps.

Droving camps were usually established at points where water was available along a given route and were often gazetted as camping and water reserves. Stockmen's camps, where Aboriginal stockmen camped on a station, are small sites, usually some distance from the homestead and white stockmen's quarters.

Police camps were the headquarters of the Native Mounted Police often situated near a homestead on early frontier properties.

- 44 (J6) A campsite north-west of Reedy Creek homestead containing silcrete, quartz and petrified wood flakes. This camp existed in the location until 1918.

## Massacre sites

These are places where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were killed by settlers and/or the Native Mounted Police.

- 45 (H6) An Aboriginal campsite.
- 46 (G2) Site of a massacre of Mitakoodi people.

## Resource or good food places

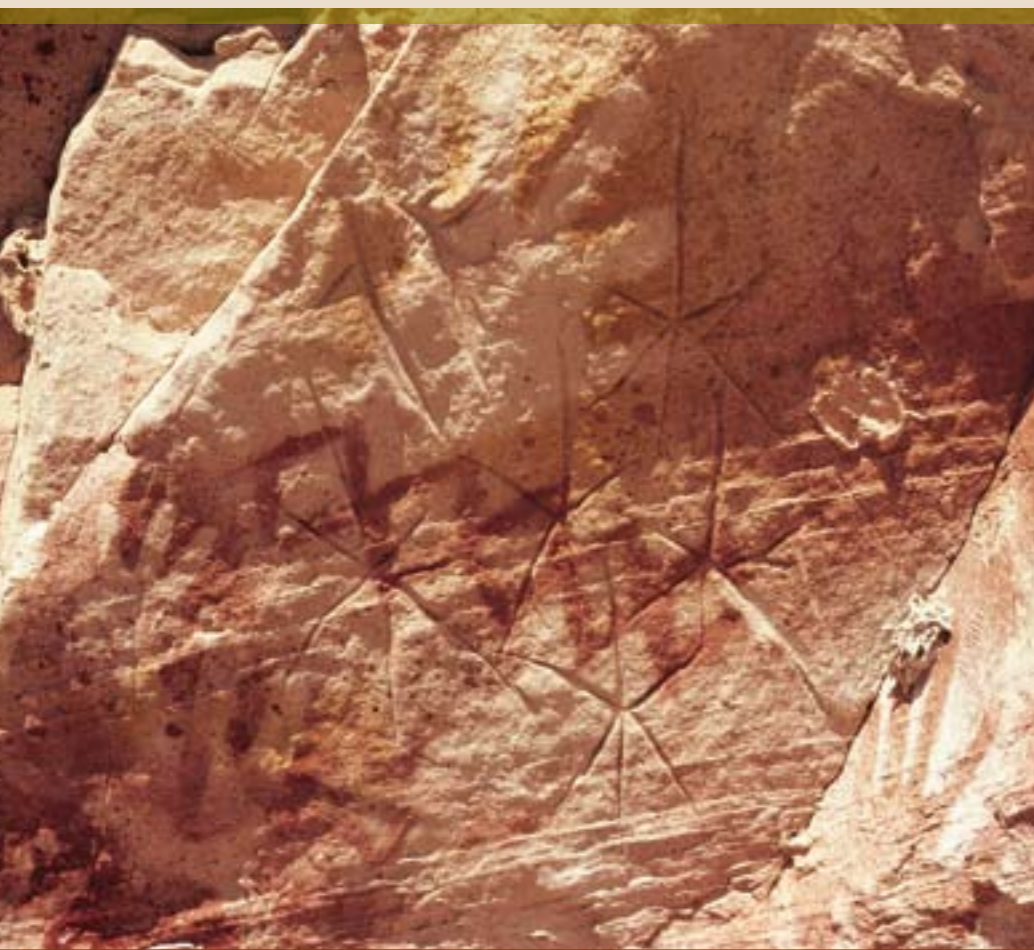
These places were used for hunting, fishing or collecting resources such as food, medicines, and building materials.

- 47 (K8) Resource food gathering area (seafood, especially bream).
- 48 (H4) Junction of Sylvester Creek and the Mulligan River where large groves of the narcotic bush *Duboisia hopwoodii* (Pituri) are located. This was a trading centre for Pituri.

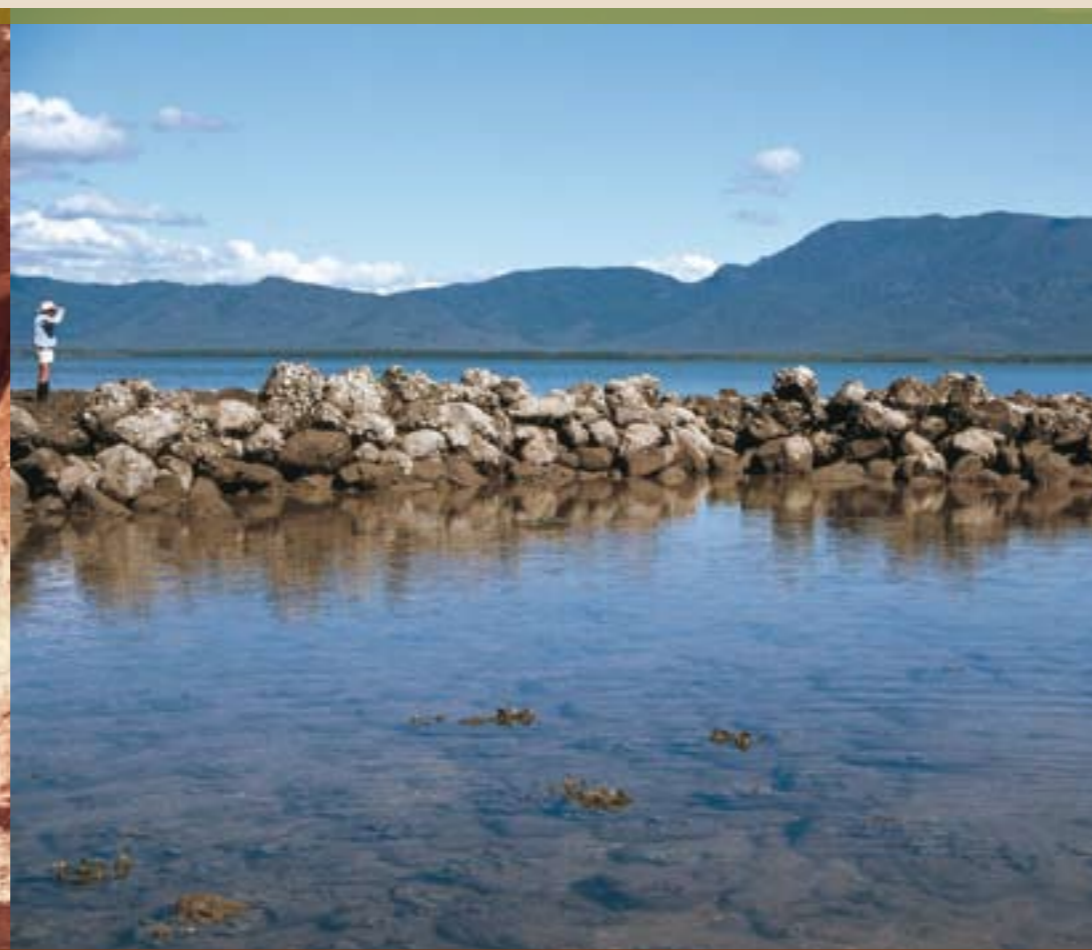
## Burials

Burials are places of great significance to Aboriginal people and are located in many different contexts, from coastal, inland or desert sand dunes to middens, rockshelters, and clay lunettes on lake margins. Bark coffins (typically, bugaroo bark) were used and decorated with ochre and string binding.

The recent repatriation of human remains has seen their return to both old burial places and new locations. Traditional and contemporary practices are often used at these burials, accompanied by ceremonial activity involving people gathering from across the region to return 'the old people' to their homes.



The Palace in the Camarvon area of central Queensland. An art site comprising an extensive escarpment with over 2 000 painted, stencilled and engraved motifs.



Part of a complex stone fish trap system at Scraggy Point on Hinchinbrook Island. The walls are approximately 135 m in length and 50 cm high.

