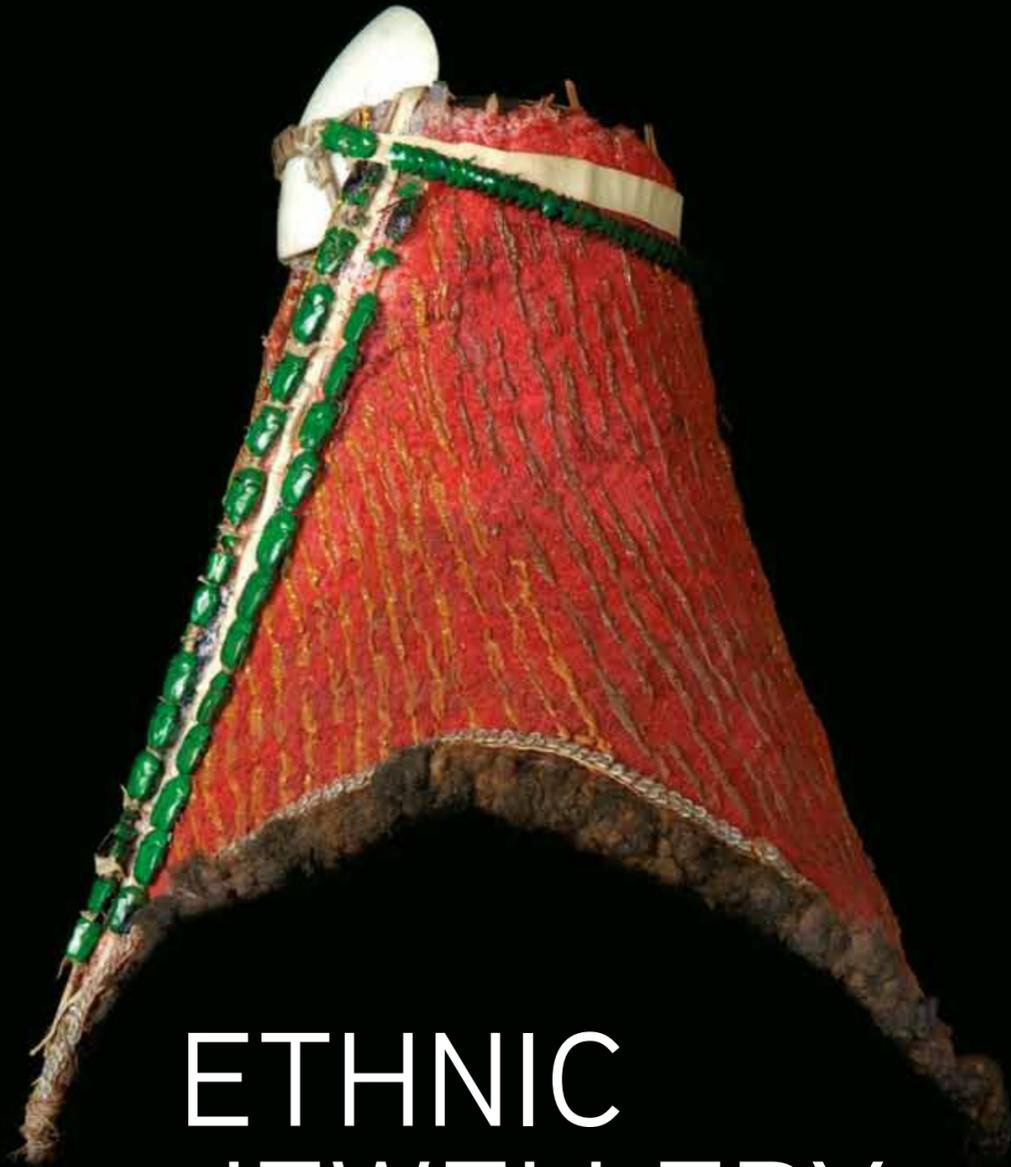


TRUUS DALDER's personal adventure in this arena seamlessly encompasses the entire South Pacific Region and extends to Asia and North Africa.



ETHNIC JEWELLERY AND ADORNMENT

Because the few books published on ethnic jewellery as a general subject have originated in Europe, Africa has been their starting point, and the adornment of the peoples of Australia and Oceania

has received only limited attention.

Specialised scholarly books on Pacific cultures often include only a few examples of jewellery; two books dedicated to the subject of body adornment in this region were published fairly recently, but are limited in scope. Aboriginal adornment has had no book, or even a chapter, devoted to it. For these reasons, my *Ethnic Jewellery and Adornment* opens with a chapter on Aboriginal adornment, and continues with significant chapters dedicated to New Guinea, Melanesia beyond New Guinea, and Polynesia. The book places these cultures firmly in an international context by subsequently proceeding to show and discuss the traditional jewellery of Asia and North Africa.

In contrast to previous general books on ethnic jewellery, *Ethnic Jewellery and Adornment* (published by Macmillan Art Publishing) offers elaborate chapters complementing the photographs taken by my son Jeremy. The volume can be used as a coffee table book thanks to its 704 large and colourful illustrations with captions, and the text of each chapter gives a thorough description of the cultures which produced the ornaments depicted, and also discusses each object in detail, making it a valuable reference book for anyone with an interest in the subject. In fact, its relevance is appreciated by a much wider circle of readers than just lovers of ethnic jewellery. For example, the incredible variety of objects provides inspiration for modern jewellers and designers.

I define ethnic jewellery as both "traditional" and "geographically limited to a particular community". The term jewellery is given a very wide meaning in my book, and it includes, for instance, pubic covers, ceremonial swords and baskets, as well as some wealth objects closely related to jewellery, such as the New Guinea "bride price". The materials used for the objects illustrated vary from boars' tusks and beetles, feathers, hair and shells, to silver and gold, enamel, coral and turquoise, to name but a few. Many pieces have taken weeks, if not months, to produce, while the design of others, centuries old, startles in its contemporary simplicity and boldness.

For the first three chapters I draw on the collections of the South Australian Museum as well as on our own collection, and this has resulted in

a seamless integration of complementary objects. Truly Indigenous pieces are shown, but also others exhibiting some European influence. Communities in Australia used materials that came to hand, such as shells and feathers, but soon learnt the usefulness of such things as camel hair and rabbit fur, European wool in bright hues, and 'Reckitt's blue' laundry powder, which made it possible to decorate a belt with figures in striking blue, a colour not available in the Aboriginal palette. Other inhabitants of the South Pacific were equally keen on the use of wool and trade cloth after European contact; many valued particularly the subsequent increase in the availability of whale and walrus ivory, which was used in Fiji and Hawaii to create ornaments for the highest chiefs.

While shells and tusks were until recently still in evidence in the adornment of some Indonesian islands, gold was highly valued and much used in this country, a contrast with the heavy and bold jewellery of the minorities of Southern China, which used massive amounts of silver, almost completely to the exclusion of all other materials. Tibet has a rich tradition of employing turquoise, amber and coral as well as incorporating Buddhist symbols in almost every piece of jewellery. The book clearly shows and describes all these differences and more, in all their individuality and



Left: **Judge's wig, ceremonial headdress**, (peng koem), PNG, Western Highlands Province, Wahgi Valley; Melpa people; mid 20th c, human hair, resin, ochre, orchid fibre, green beetles, white baler shell, H 47.5 cm, W 35cm.

Top: **Widow's chaplet**, (chimurilia), Central Australia, Hermannsburg; Aranda people; 19th/20th c, bones of small animals, spinifex resin, human hair; preserved by Museum on wire circlet. H 29cm, W 15cm.

Above: **Turtle shell and clam shell head ornament**, (kapkap), Solomon Islands; 19th c, turtle shell, clam shell, diameter 12cm.



rich variety. And yet, it also becomes obvious that the meaning of adornment is very similar in many societies: it enhances the status of the wearer, but simultaneously sends subtle messages to other members of the same group: expressions of joy, grief, fear, birth, death and spirituality.

An Aboriginal widow's chaplet is an interesting example of such messages: this was worn by Aranda (Arrernte) widows to signify the end of the mourning period. The widow attached the bones of small animals to hair she had obtained from relatives of her dead husband. She wore the head decoration during a graveside ceremony; its aim was to make her unrecognisable to the dead man's spirit, which was meant to be frightened away by the sight. She then buried the chaplet in a small hole near the grave, symbolically burying her sorrow.

Great exuberance is shown in a festive and splendid so-called 'Judge's Wig' from the Waghi Valley in the Papua New Guinea Highlands. It was made with great ceremony and secrecy: a pig was sacrificed before the process was started, and men were not to have intercourse with their wives while it was being made, or else the wig would lack colour and the man's skin would be dry. Men saved up hair, which was fastened onto a rattan frame with resin. After elaborate treatment the wigs were painted a bright red colour and enhanced with rows of green beetles along the front, while the men wore it with a round white circle of shell on the forehead for their festival attire.

In Australia, Melanesia and Polynesia, men wore the most exuberant and splendid adornment, proclaiming their status as 'Big Men', Elders, Warriors and Chiefs. In south-west China, marriageable girls showed off their parents' ability to provide a substantial dowry, while in India the nature and quantity of jewellery might form part of the marriage contract — a small compensation for the fact that women could until recently not own land. In Mongolia, married women wore the most magnificent headdresses. It is obvious that the function of adornment has differed in communities, although brides are splendidly adorned in almost every culture: perhaps nowhere more ostentatiously than among Central Asian Turkomen, where brides might have to carry up to seventeen kilograms of gilt silver jewellery studded with carnelians, and in earlier days might have been expected to wear most of this until the birth of their first child.

Unfortunately, much knowledge about traditional jewellery has already been irretrievably lost. In my book I have attempted to gather the information still available to preserve it for future generations, when many of these splendid pieces of adornment are likely to be surviving specimens from a distant past. □



Top: **Headband of kangaroo teeth**, Northern Territory; 19th/20th c, kangaroo teeth, resin, vegetable fibre string, ochre, pipeclay, H 21cm.

Above: **Man's ceremonial chest decoration**, (marangga), Indonesia, west Sumba; 19th/20th c, gold, H 18.5 cm, W 26.5cm.