

Mitchell, James -TAPEI -GR

From : jnagata@yorku.ca
Sent: May 18, 2001 10:50 AM
To: james.mitchell@dfait-maeci.gc.ca
Cc: alvyn@yorku.ca
Subject: it's ours!!

Jimmy-- I am writing this for Michael, who thanks you for your thoughts on the provenience of the Mackay artifacts. You might refer to page 288-289 from "Far Formosa", where he talks about his museum. This would suggest that much of his natural and ethnographic collections were an important and well-k nown part of his educational work in Taiwan. On this basis we can assume he came by these collections honestly.

Elsewhere he refers to saving some gods for his museum from the burning of "idols" carried out by new converts. Whatever we may think of this today, this was an essential part of the process of religious catharsis, even institutionalised in the service book of the PCT, a service for casting out idols.

As for aboriginal artifacts, there are no references in Mackay, but we do know that even in his day, aboriginal people came to the trading towns and sold these things to collectors. Presumably many were traded or received as gift exchanges, and it seems quite logical that many items, especially Plains Aborigine artifacts, were probably given as gifts for his museum by original owners. We know that Mackay's museum was quite famous in his day, and attracted the interest and visits of even non-Christian literati.

Mackay's museum is loing gone, and many of the artifacts that he mentions in FFF have disappeared. It is the good fortune of both Canada and Taiwan that a small selection (16 boxes) came to Canada in 1993, where they are well preserved, and now will be available for the celebration of Taiwan's cultures, both here and and elsewhere.

That's the answer Michael says he would give!

Judith (Michael's advisor)

You may contact Michael through this email address anytime

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