

FIRST CARVING TO JAPAN

The first-ever Aboriginal carving to be exported from Australia left Dampier, aboard the salt ship the Regent Azalea, for Tokyo on January 19. On its arrival in Tokyo, the Chairman for Dampier Salt, Mr Christie, will present the carving to the Tokyo Museum on behalf of the W.A. Museum.

The carving, 41cm x 36cm x 11cm thick has the figure of a turtle engraved into its surface. Formation of the idea of presenting a carving to the Tokyo Museum originated at the official opening of the Dampier Salt Project in December, 1971.

A visiting Japanese official, Mr Bekku, president of the Solar Association of Japan, during a tour of the Project became very excited at Pump Station Zero where he saw numerous turtles.

Later the same day at a formal dinner, Mr Bekku in his speech stated the reason for his excitement had been the presence of so many turtles in Pump Station Zero. In Japan, he said, the turtle is a very good omen reflecting a long and successful life.

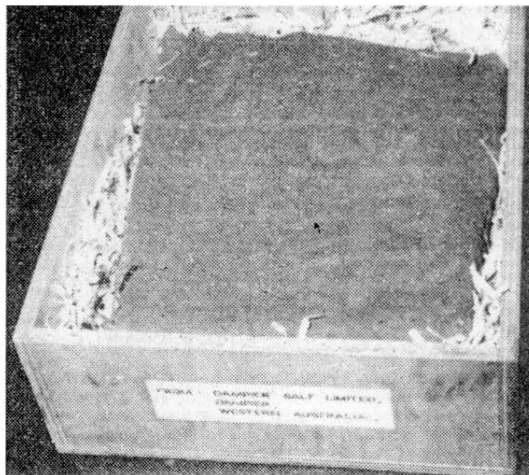
Enzo Virilli, an engineer with Dampier Salt who is very interested in mapping and correlating Aboriginal camp and carving sites, had just found a small carving of a turtle. Mr Virilli is a local expert on Ancient Aboriginal sites who has mapped and photographed over 6,000 engravings on the salt lease.

The suggestion of presenting the carving to the Tokyo

Museum was then made to the West Australian Museum who accepted it and contacted Tokyo.

The State Museum was receptive to the idea primarily because of the work done for the museum by Mr Virilli and the care and awareness shown by Dampier Salt for the areas of carvings.

Hamersley Iron have similarly shown awareness for the care and preservation of carving sites on their lease. Permission to export the carving also involved the local Aboriginal Elders who gave their permission for the removal of the carving.



Above: Carving boxed up ready for export aboard the Regent Azalea. Below: Three of the people deeply involved with the shipping of the carving discuss the event - Left to right: Captain Sung Nak Wun, Korean skipper of the Regent Azalea, Enzo Virilli who found the carving and Coppen Dale, the oldest of the tribal Elders at Roebourne who gave their permission for the shipment to take place.

