

7. 'An Arnhem Land adventure':¹ Representations of Macassan– Indigenous Australian connections in popular geographical magazines

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Introduction

Long time ago, when the north east wind blew, the Mangatharra would travel from their place up north in Indonesia to Arnhem Land. They came in Macassan boats called prahus. They planted tamarind trees and traded with Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal people, they traded the trepang which is sea cucumber and the Mangatharra traded knives and material. They also introduced smoking, you know with a pipe, and rice, and taught the Yolngu how to make pottery. (Burarrwanga 2008)

Laklak Burarrwanga (Datiwuy and Rirratjingu elder, caretaker for Gumatj and eldest sister) regularly tells visitors to her home at Bawaka in northeast Arnhem Land stories about the Macassans in the same way her fathers and grandfathers told them to her. In 1987 Laklak made her own journey to Sulawesi to find family members (described by Cooke 1987), whom she still remains in contact with, and Indigenous people from all over Arnhem Land have been involved in a number of projects that have, in different ways, celebrated their connections to Makassar (for examples, see Janson 2001; Langton 2011; Palmer 2007; Stephenson 2007).

Details regarding the Macassan visits to northern Australia and the trepang trade have also been the focus of considerable academic attention, much of which is summarised elsewhere in this volume. A lot of it relies heavily on the earlier work of anthropologists Donald Thomson (1949c) and Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1951, 1954) and the archaeological investigations of Campbell Macknight (1976) and D. J. Mulvaney (1989). This research largely focuses on the impact Macassan contact had on Australian Indigenous society, both materially and culturally (see, for example, Baker 1999; Clarke 2000; Evans 1992; McIntosh 2006, 2008; Mitchell 1995; Swain 1991; Urry and Walsh 1981). Macknight has

¹ This title makes reference to anthropologist Donald Thomson's magazine article 'An Arnhem Land adventure', published in *The National Geographic Magazine* (Thomson 1948a).

recently provided a comprehensive review of the literature to date, writing, ‘the existence of the trepang industry in northern Australia and some of its effects on Aboriginal societies have long been known, at least to those who cared to look’ (2008, p. 139). While this may be the case in academic circles, it is not necessarily the same for the rest of Australia, whose exposure to these stories is arguably quite limited (Bilous 2011; Stephenson 2007).

This chapter therefore aims to examine one of the ways in which Macassan–Indigenous Australian contact stories have been told to a non-academic, popular audience. I look specifically at the ways in which popular geographical magazines, particularly Australia’s *Walkabout* magazine, but also the better known *National Geographic* and *Australian Geographic* magazines, have told these connection stories throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.² I identify the discourses that are drawn upon and reinforced in the representations, specifically discourses of *terra nullius*, the ‘othering’ of Indigenous Australians from Arnhem Land and the presentation of Arnhem Land as a frontier landscape. In order to better understand the context and some of the reasons for the use of such discourses, I draw on a cultural memory framework, a framework that focuses on the ways in which media texts, like popular geographical magazines, contribute to a collective memory of past events.

Cultural memory and entangled discourses

‘Cultural memory’, ‘collective memory’ and ‘social memory’ are all terms used by academics from an increasing range of disciplines to emphasise the notion that a person’s memories are not constructed in isolation but as members of a society (see, for example, Ben-Amos and Weissberg 1999; Knapp 1989; Sturken 1997). Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, a key figure in the study of memory’s collective context, wrote, ‘It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories’ (1992, p. 38). While it is in the fields of psychology and sociology that a lot of work on collective memory exists, increasingly cultural memory has been an important area of study for historians and geographers. Many of these studies have to a certain extent focused on how political and social frameworks shape and even control cultural memory, emphasising the influence of various agencies in the construction of identity. For example, cultural geographer

² My definition of ‘geographical magazines’ is not discipline based, but focuses on those popular magazines that specifically engage with place.

Nuala Johnson argues that '[m]emory as re-collection, re-remembering, and re-presentation is crucial in the mapping of significant historical moments and in the articulation of personal identity' (2004, p. 317).

There is also considerable literature that specifically seeks to understand the role of the media in the formation of collective or cultural memories (see, for example, Bonnet 2002; Erll and Rigney 2009). Karen Till, for example, attempts to separate the concepts of 'collective memory' and 'public memory', the latter referring to the cultural space and process through which 'collective memories' are performed: 'Part of that process includes the creation and appropriation of landscapes, cultural objects, narratives (and here I include formal histories) and images by groups to support their social myths of identity' (1999, p. 255). Till aims to disentangle the role of the media in influencing the form and various interpretations of Berlin's *Neue Wache* ('New Guardhouse') memorial. Astrid Erll (2009) also analyses the ways in which different media help shape collective memory. She focuses on the 'Indian Mutiny', the rebellion against British rule in northern and central India in 1857, analysing the contributions made by different media, including the British press, in an ongoing process of remembering and forgetting. One of Erll's arguments is that the British press drew on a set of established images in order to help a largely uninformed public make sense of an event filled with atrocities.

In a similar way, the stories of Macassan and Indigenous Australian connections presented by popular geographical magazines were shaped by authors whose articles arguably reflect a particular set of world views. This chapter examines three well-established and well-entangled discourses—*terra nullius*, frontier landscapes and 'othering' of Indigenous Australians—in order to understand better the role that popular geographical magazines had, and continue to have, in 'constructing, maintaining and transforming' the stories of connection' (Till 1999, p. 263).

Many of these discourses have received attention from geographers. Richie Howitt and Sue Jackson (1998) explored the 'darker aspects' of geography's 'colonial baggage', arguing that geography had an important role in the construction of a particular understanding of the Australian landscape, an understanding that was used to justify European colonisation. The notion of *terra nullius*—a country empty and belonging to no-one—was prevalent in the work and writing of geographical societies in the early twentieth century. These societies, established in the 1880s, aimed to disseminate geographical knowledge and 'helped build a dominant geographical imaginary which saw Australia as empty, unknown, and waiting for (white) settlement' (Howitt 2001, p. 236).

Alongside the creation of a discourse of *terra nullius* is the 'othering' of Indigenous Australians. 'Othering' is an important tool in the formation of identity and

many geographers have looked at the ways boundary-drawing practices are used in identity formation, and the ways in which people define themselves in opposition to others (see, for example, Green 2004; Lloyd et al. 2010; Newman 2006). Underlying this is the theme of colonial racism, as ‘othering’ is also used as a powerful tool to emphasise one group’s dominance or superiority over another. Its role in scientifically dehumanising those outside the Euro–American centre and, therefore, legitimising American–European hegemony is challenged by Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (1996). James Duncan (1993) also discusses the way the discourse of ‘other’ has been used to socialise or colonise different sites. He argues that the twentieth-century ‘other’ of cultural anthropology worked to de-historicise people by the ‘temporalisation of space’, creating a timeless space where past and present were conceived as one and the same. This is certainly the case in the popular geographical magazines analysed for this chapter, where the ‘other’ is never given a voice.

The third entangled discourse is that of the ‘frontier’, described by Howitt as an image that ‘simultaneously contains the familiar and excludes the alien and incomprehensible Other’ (2001, p. 235). The desire to emphasise images of a frontier can be understood in the travel-writing genre. Mary Louise Pratt argues through a series of case studies that this genre has an ‘obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself’ (1992, p. 5). For Pratt, ‘contact zones’ or ‘social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other’ (p. 4) are synonymous with the colonial frontier and there is a need to constantly reproduce them. The use of frontier imagery has an additional role in geographical magazines with the quest to invent and present possible tourist destinations. In specific reference to Queensland’s Carnarvon Gorge, Jackie Huggins et al. (1997) describe early depictions seeking to ‘reinvent a frontier land, an unoccupied land open to ‘discovery’’ (p. 240). Tony Bennett (1988) also addresses this in his critical reflections on Australian museum and heritage policy, arguing that the representation of wilderness or heritage is achieved within an organised frame to meet the needs of a particular audience. The same can be seen in geographical magazines where the representation of Arnhem Land is arguably constructed in opposition to life inside Australian cities (the place where the majority of Australians live). *Walkabout*, for example, is quite clear in its aim to present this romantic image.

Walkabout, National Geographic and Australian Geographic

Walkabout was first published in November 1934 by the Australian National Travel Association, an organisation whose aim was to advertise Australia’s

tourist attractions internationally. The founder and editor until 1957 was Charles Holmes, who wrote, 25 years later in *Walkabout*, 'I thought Australians, or at any rate the thoughtful few, would welcome a geographical journal telling the story of the vast and comparatively little known Australia which existed beyond the cities' (1959, p. 8). Charles Lloyd Jones, the Deputy Chairman of the Australian National Travel Association when *Walkabout* was launched, introduced the first issue, writing, 'we have embarked on an educational crusade which will enable Australians and the people of other lands to learn more of the romantic Australia that exists beyond the cities, and the enchanted South Sea Islands and New Zealand' (1934, p. 7). From the very first issue, *Walkabout* clearly portrayed an image of Australia as an imagined frontier, in opposition to life in Australian cities. The result was a monthly magazine, published between 1934 and 1972, of illustrated articles written by a range of writers including geographers, anthropologists, missionaries and adventure-seekers.

Much of the academic writing that has focused on *Walkabout* explores the magazine's representation of Indigenous Australians. Max Quanchi (2004), for example, looks at images of the Pacific Islands in *Walkabout*, suggesting that they are full of oppositions and dissonances, presenting stereotypes of both the Pacific Islands and Australian 'Aborigines'. Glen Ross's (1999) focus is on *Walkabout*'s representation of Australia within a masculine, national narrative of progress in which Indigenous Australians were ideologically erased by being presented as a vanishing race.

Jillian Barnes (2007) traces the development of *Walkabout* through the lens of tourism, focusing on the images of Gwoja Tjungurrayi ('One Pound Jimmy'), which were appropriated in order to compare the progress of modern Australia with 'Stone Age' Australian 'Aborigines'. Historian Lynette Russell (1994) also explores the romantic stereotypes of Indigenous people presented by *Walkabout* throughout the 1950s. She argues that '[t]hese visions of Aboriginal Australia were conservative and emphasized a uniform Australia-wide Indigenous Australian culture, which although evidencing a deep genealogy had changed little through time' (p. 4). Russell's work, however, does not acknowledge the numerous articles in *Walkabout* that focus on or make reference to the long and complex histories of contact that exist between the Macassans and Indigenous Australians, stories that problematise this popular Australian discourse.

Walkabout's last issue was published in May 1974 and, in many ways, *Australian Geographic* took up the mantle of promoting Australian tourism. *Australian Geographic* was first published in 1985 by entrepreneur and adventurer Dick Smith, and then sold to Fairfax Media Limited in 1995 and then to ACP (formerly Australian Consolidated Press) magazines in 2006. There is comparatively little academic writing on *Australian Geographic*.

The better known, and internationally focused, *National Geographic* was first published in October 1888. It was produced by the American National Geographic Society, a society whose aim was to organise the diffusion of geographical knowledge. *National Geographic* has been subject to considerable academic scrutiny, much of which examines the interface of media representations and identity (see, for example, Beaudreau 2002; Darling-Wolf and Mendelson 2008; Pauly 1979; Rothenberg 1994). Julie Tuason (1999), for example, looks at *National Geographic* for the ideological undercurrents that drove and legitimatised US Government policies, reminding her readers that the magazine very much reflected and determined the American ideology of expansion. David Jansson's (2003) study of *National Geographic*'s 'internal othering' of the American south in order to assist in the creation of a more positive American national identity is particularly interesting in the context of this chapter.

Before beginning my discussion, it is important to note that in terms of methodology this chapter is based on a survey of articles published in *Walkabout*, *National Geographic* and *Australian Geographic* magazines that make reference to the contact between Macassans and Indigenous Australians. While there are some articles that focus on Indonesia and Arnhem Land in isolation, in this survey I focus only on those that make direct reference to the contact between the Macassans, who in early geographical magazines are predominantly referred to as 'Malays', and Indigenous Australians. There were 31 articles, the majority in *Walkabout* (25), four in *Australian Geographic* and two in *National Geographic* (see Figure 7.1). The articles are analysed in chronological order so as to both acknowledge the entangled nature of the themes and discourses used by the authors and make clearer the ways in which the articles constantly refer to those published previously. In this way, they can be seen to be working together, either intentionally or unintentionally, to reshape the collective memory of Macassan–Indigenous Australian contact, building on or eventually forgetting it.

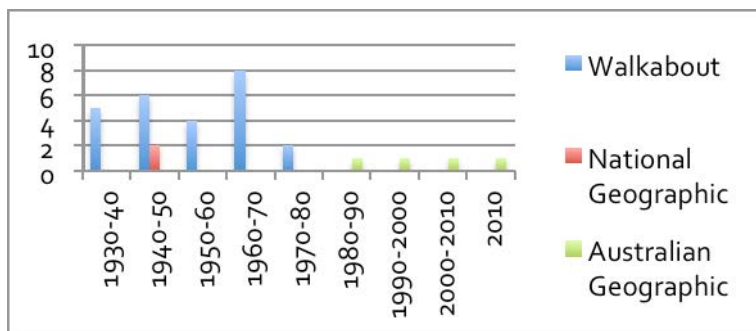


Figure 7.1 Articles in popular geographical magazines *Walkabout*, *National Geographic* and *Australian Geographic* that make reference to connections between the Macassans and Indigenous Australians

Building and shaping a collective memory of Macassan–Indigenous Australian contact stories

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Macassan contact with Arnhem Land is frequently referenced in *Walkabout*, although not always in any detail. The first article that makes any reference was written by Donald MacLean (in January 1935) as the first of a series of five articles focusing on the search for the 'Great South Land'. MacLean acknowledges Malay knowledge of Australia but dismisses the Macassan trade. He compares Malay lack of interest in northern Australia with an initial Dutch lack of interest, writing, 'The Malays were pre-eminently traders, and for the trader Australia held nothing' (1935, p. 39). This is the first of a number of images of *terra nullius*, which were commonly used in the representation of Australia in *Walkabout* magazine during this period.

The following month (February 1935), adventure travel writer and frequent contributor to *Walkabout* Ion L. Idriess invokes a *terra nullius* when he describes Arnhem Land as 'a large vacant space east of Darwin' and as a country represented on maps as 'mostly a series of blanks' (1935, p. 31). Alongside his descriptions of the natural landscape, Idriess describes the Aborigines as 'stone-age' and as 'a relic of long past human history' (p. 33). As well as invoking images of a *terra nullius*, he also uses images of a dangerous frontier landscape, emphasising the people's 'warlike' nature, cataloguing their victories and writing: 'His list of luggers looted and burned at the water's edge makes quite a respectable tally in the annals of canoe piracy' (p. 33). As well as serving to emphasise the author's own heroic qualities, the use of such imagery can arguably be attributed to a desire to represent a frontier landscape, an unoccupied landscape open for exploration and discovery. But how do discourses of a *terra nullius* and frontier landscape account for the centuries of Macassan contact? According to Idriess, the reason Arnhem Landers can be described as 'virile' and 'warlike' is as a result of centuries of contact with the Macassans. This contact had resulted in 'the admixture of Malay blood, for the proas of these sea-raiders have, until recent years, visited our northern shores for centuries past' (p. 33). It is this article, focusing on a genetic difference between Arnhem Land Aborigines and other Indigenous Australians, which sets the tone for other references to the Macassans throughout the 1930s and begins the process of 'othering'.

Three years later, in August 1938, journalist Colin Bednall was commissioned to travel on a patrol boat along the Arnhem Land coast, searching for illegal Japanese luggers. He writes: 'We encountered hundreds of wild natives, some of them cannibals and some very sullen' (1938, p. 14). Bednall says that despite the cannibalistic nature of the people, the presence of Malay blood is a 'valuable

addition', and he believes it resulted in better-looking people with improved 'appearance and stature' and women who 'might almost have been termed attractive' with their lighter skin and straighter noses (p. 16). In fact, Bednall took it upon himself to name one of these women after a famous actress he was reminded of. The results of Macassan contact are viewed by Bednall as positive and are used to serve as a contrast with the impact of the Japanese pearlers and trepangers, whom the patrol boat was trying to root out. In the case of Japanese contact, Bednall describes the result as 'tragic', resulting in 'the saddest-looking children' who were 'undersized, and had extraordinary features' (p. 16).

The emphasis again is that people in Arnhem Land are somehow different from Indigenous people in the rest of Australia. While Indigenous people across the rest of Australia are presented by *Walkabout* as being uniformly the same across space and time, Arnhem Land is presented as the exception. Throughout the rest of Australia, Indigenous people were 'othered' by being placed in a timeless space where past and present were one, but those articles that deal with Arnhem Land Aborigines are 'othered' through a focus on Macassan impacts.

In magazine articles that tell contact stories, one might expect to come across a number of 'others', but interestingly, in articles that include both Macassans and Indigenous Australians, the Macassans are not used to represent the 'other' but are only used as a tool in order to emphasise a case for the 'othering' of Arnhem Land Indigenous people. In these cases the authors perceive more similarities between the Macassans and themselves than they do with Indigenous Australians. Not only are Arnhem Landers different from the white Australian authors, the authors argue that they are different from the rest of Indigenous Australia within this European colonial framework. Needless to say, the successful process of 'othering' Arnhem Landers is also a powerful silencing tool seen by the fact that the Indigenous voice is wholly absent from each of the stories presented to readers of *Walkabout*.

One of the possible reasons that Indigenous people of Arnhem Land were considered different to Indigenous people in other parts of Australia at this time was perhaps the result of the negative press they received throughout the 1930s. In particular, the killing of five Japanese crew from two trepang luggers at Caledon Bay, the killing of two white trepangers and the subsequent spearing of Constable Albert Stuart McColl of the Northern Territory Police at Woodah Island in Blue Mud Bay in August 1933—all received extensive newspaper coverage at the time. Articles that describe various aspects of the murders and the indignation relating to the poor handling of the arrests, which were made under false pretences, along with the subsequent trial of Dhaakiyarr and three other Aborigines from Caledon Bay appeared in each of the major Australian

newspapers as well as many smaller ones.³ The Indigenous people of Caledon Bay were described in the press as 'treacherous murderers', and a punitive expedition was planned, although never carried out.

These events were what prompted well-known anthropologist Donald Thomson's request to the Commonwealth Government to visit Arnhem Land. Having previously worked in Cape York and publicly protested the treatment of Indigenous people at Aurukun, he was funded by the Commonwealth Government to establish friendly relations with the 'Arnhem Land Aborigines' and to help them to understand the gravity of their actions. In Thomson's own words, published in *Walkabout*, he makes it quite clear that the reason for his visit was 'to make a study of the natives and the causes of fighting and unrest' (1946, p. 5).

Detailed accounts of Thomson's life and expeditions into Arnhem Land have received recent academic attention and his significant contribution both to the discipline of anthropology and to Aboriginal affairs is now recognised (Peterson 2005; Wiseman 1996). Thomson's first account of Arnhem Land was published in *Walkabout* in August 1946 and was entitled 'The story of Arnhem Land' (*Walkabout's* italics). Soon after, 'Arnhem Land adventure' was published in March 1948 in *National Geographic* and the much lengthier 'Arnhem Land: explorations among an unknown people' in *The Geographical Journal* for Britain's Royal Geographical Society in three parts between 1948 and 1949 (Thomson 1948b, 1949a, 1949b). The articles in all three magazines focus on the adventurous aspects of the expedition, telling tales of fording crocodile-infested rivers barefooted and starving, rather than providing an anthropological study of Arnhem Landers.⁴

Reflecting Idriess 11 years earlier, Thomson in his opening description in 'The story of Arnhem Land' describes a frontier into a *terra nullius*—'a vast untamed No Man's Land, unknown and practically unexplored'—and towards the end of the same column: 'Until recent years, this country remained practically unknown' (1946, p. 5). As for the Indigenous Australians of Arnhem Land, Thomson immediately narrates a story of their difference from other Indigenous Australians. In his second paragraph, he writes, 'The aborigines of Arnhem Land are assured of a place in the history of Australia—the only aborigines who have dared to defend their birthright, and who have stood out consistently against the injustice of the white man' (p. 5). While outrageous, this statement reflects

3 See, for example, 'Story of Caledon Bay massacre' (*The Advertiser*, Friday, 13 October 1933, p. 21); 'The Caledon Bay natives' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday, 7 December 1933, p. 1); 'The Caledon Bay killers' (*The Courier-Mail*, Monday, 16 April 1934, p. 1); 'Caledon Bay murder: claim for salvage' (*The Argus*, Thursday, 16 August 1934, p. 7).

4 Peterson (2005) writes that in the *National Geographic* version, '[i]t is clear that editors played fast and loose with Thomson's text...[it] contains typographical errors...misleading captions, obvious rewrites and interpellations from the editors' (p. 44).

that of Matthew Flinders, whose description of the Aborigines of Caledon Bay in 1803 as not 'showing that timidity so usual with the Australians', is quoted by Thomson (1946, p. 5). Both Flinders and Thompson claim this lack of timidity to be a result of their contact with the Macassans, and while Thomson dismisses outright any evidence of the genetic impact emphasised by previous contributors to *Walkabout*, he does continue to narrate a story of Arnhem Land Aborigines' difference or 'otherness' as a result of this contact.

Thomson's was one of several anthropological expeditions made into Arnhem Land during the late 1930s and 1940s that also included Ronald and Catherine Berndt (in the mid 1940s) and the *National Geographic* sponsored 1948 American–Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land. This expedition was also well publicised in Australian and US newspapers and then in the *National Geographic* in December 1949. Australian ethnologist Charles P. Mountford again invokes an isolated, unknown *terra nullius*, but unlike Thomson, almost dismisses the Macassan presence in Australia, writing that after Dutch discovery in the 1600s, '[s]ave for natives, of course, and occasional Malay fishing fleets, the coast was virtually deserted for the next century and a half' (1949, p. 746). He traces the history of Arnhem Land's 'discovery', including the exploratory journey of Flinders, followed by the sentence, 'Since that master map maker's departure, the world has heard little about Arnhem Land' (p. 746). Again, Mountford draws on a frontier myth that emphasises Arnhem Land's obscurity.

While serving perhaps to glorify Mountford's own explorations, Arnhem Land's obscurity is a myth that is not backed up in Australian newspapers at the time due to the reporting of violence in the 1930s and the numerous expeditions in the 1940s. In fact, V. C. Hall, in *Walkabout* in May 1948, completely debunks the idea of Arnhem Land as the last unexplored frontier when he writes, 'Arnhem Land is no longer untrodden and unknown...Much of the colour, the romance and dangers of this region belong to the past, awaiting the pen of an inspired writer to cause the fascinating stories of the days before the coming of the European to live again—in Australian literature' (1948, p. 35).

While perhaps not the 'literature' Hall was referring to, Thomson's next published articles for *Walkabout* in 1957 contribute to this idea. He focuses first on the '*lippa-lippa*' or dugout canoe introduced from Makassar (in June 1957) and then in the following month (July 1957b) explores other cultural impacts Macassan visitors had on the people of Arnhem Land. In particular, Thomson explains the pattern of behaviour or conduct that Indigenous people established with the Macassan visitors, whereby there was mutual respect and a good working relationship. Thomson argues that it was because this code of conduct was ignored by the 'white man', who 'assumed that they were like all the other "aborigines" he had encountered and had attempted to walk rough-shot over them' (1957b, p. 30), that subsequently led to the violent clashes described

in the 1930s. While Thomson comes out in support of the Indigenous people of Arnhem Land, working to provide his readers with explanations for the problems facing them, he still continues to emphasise their difference from other Indigenous Australians. While on the surface a person whose understanding goes beyond the assumption that Indigenous Australians are the same across the country seems positive, it is clear that Thomson attributes this difference solely to their previous contact with the Macassans. At this point Thomson is also focusing on interactions that he believes belong to the past and are well over. In fact, in his earlier articles Thomson's concern is that 'the aborigines of Arnhem Land are a little farther down the road to extinction' (1946, p. 22).

Through the 1950s and 1960s the focus of articles in *Walkabout* regarding Indigenous Australians and Macassans seems to change again. The majority of articles about Arnhem Land Aborigines are written by anthropologists and Macassan contact is just one part of that narrative. They provide only general information regarding the contact and resultant impact on Indigenous Australians. For example, well-known anthropologist Fred McCarthy, who was present on the 1948 American–Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land led by Mountford, writes two articles, one on utensils used by Indigenous Australians and another on rock art (McCarthy 1957, 1964).

In several articles published by *Walkabout* in September 1952, April 1963 and December 1965, however, the Macassan–Indigenous Australian contact period is invoked in articles that aim to highlight the positive work being done by missionaries. In September 1953, Trevor Tuckfield reminds readers of a period of hostility when '[t]he Arnhem Land natives were perhaps the most savage and ferocious of all the Australian aborigines' (p. 14), and reflects on the success of the missionaries. This success, Tuckfield suggests, was because Arnhem Landers were, of all Australian Aborigines, 'the easiest to teach'. He continues: 'To us they were the most intelligent and finest physical examples of all that we had so far come in contact with. This, no doubt, was due to an infusion of Malay and Macassan blood' (p. 14). Ignoring the research and articles published by Thomson that dismissed a genetic impact, Tuckfield instead chooses to reflect on the images of Aborigines that were created much earlier, in the 1930s.

Cecil Holmes in 1963 again invokes the dark, violent time of the 1930s and makes reference to the eminent and fondly remembered Thomson, using this to contrast with the current situation at the Yirrkala mission. The new picture invoked is peaceful and purposeful. He writes: 'Along the beach at Yirrkala, in the shade of the great Tamarin trees, the artists sit in the sand painting with slow care and patience. There are up to a hundred of them, perhaps one of the strangest concentrations of creative endeavour anywhere' (p. 12). In a similar way, an unattributed photographic essay in *Walkabout* in December 1964 focuses on the fame of the Yirrkala paintings. The author is unsurprised regarding the

artists' adept painting style on the basis that these are Aboriginal people who also used steel for 200 years as a result of Macassan visits (Anonymous 1964, p. 42). In a similar way, in 1965, Keith Willey, when describing Bathurst Island in *Walkabout*, compares the current 'happy, smiling people' of the mission with men who 'were savage warriors, blood drinkers, reputed cannibals and polygamists who treated their women as chattels' and massacred the Macassans (p. 51). Again, the reader is reminded that the Malay and Melanesian facial characteristics of these Aborigines meant that they were far more advanced in comparison with those on the mainland and were, therefore, able to learn quickly from the missionaries. While the discourse is no longer one of a violent or empty frontier, the 'othering' of Arnhem Land Indigenous people is still being emphasised by yet again focusing on the ways in which they were different from their contemporaries in the rest of Australia. It is at this time that *Walkabout* was also publishing articles that focused on the removal of Indigenous people from their homelands (see, for example, Carter and Carter 1965; Ford 1968; Smith 1967).

By the 1970s the number of articles that make reference to the Macassans decreases sharply. There are only two, both making only brief reference to the Macassans in terms of the discovery of Australia, questioning who discovered it first. The first article, in January 1973, is part of a special focus issue on the 'Top End'. Given the focus of this magazine it is surprising that the only reference to the Macassans is by author, Joan Cobb, who focuses on Groote Eylandt's 'discovery' by the Macassans. Similarly, in April 1973, the last reference to Macassan contact in *Walkabout* is very similar to the first (by MacLean in 1935) and relates in a similar way to the early 'discovery' of Australia by the 'Malays' (Rooke 1973). Just more than 12 months later, with no more references to the Macassans, publication of *Walkabout* ceases and it is another 11 years before *Australian Geographic's* launch.

In *Australian Geographic* the references to Macassans in Arnhem Land are sporadic and very brief: four articles in 26 years make the briefest of references. Two of these articles make reference to rock paintings that include the depiction of praus (Curl 1990; Eastwood 2010). In addition to these, adventure traveller Rory McGuinness (1989) narrates his visit to Sulawesi and is surprised to learn of the local fishermen and sailors' knowledge of northern Australia, stories of their ancestors' regular visits and the 'amicable' relationships formed with the Indigenous people they met there. McGuinness is perhaps surprised because by the late 1980s, despite the fact that Macassan–Indigenous Australian contact histories are still being celebrated in Arnhem Land itself, the stories are no longer being told in the popular media. They are no longer considered significant and, as Erll and Rigney argue, media shapes memory, the 'ongoing process

of remembrance and forgetting in which individuals and groups continue to refigure their relationship to the past and hence reposition themselves in relation to established and emergent memory sites' (2009, p. 2).

The next reference to the Macassans is in 2006, in an article written by Amanda Burdon, who, just like many contributors to *Walkabout*, invokes the same entangled discourses in her description of Arnhem Land. The article is entitled 'Still Arnhem Land' and she writes: 'What makes the Yolngu of Arnhem Land unique among the Aboriginal peoples of Australia is that they were never completely displaced and have occupied their country since the time of the Dreaming' (p. 72). Burdon succeeds in 'othering' the Indigenous people of Arnhem Land and, yet again, Arnhem Land is placed at the frontier, described as a land that was 'left undisturbed for centuries by all but Macassan seasonal fishermen', despite this single reference to the Macassans. She provides no information about these 'seasonal fishermen' and they are dismissed as something belonging to the past. In this particular case, Indigenous culture serves as a promotional tool, essential to the creation of an Australian frontier.

Silencing Indigenous Australians on the Arnhem Land 'frontier'

A number of discourses are at work in the popular geographical magazines of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, discourses that represent Indigenous Australians as unchanged across time and place. The representation of Macassan and Indigenous Australian contact stories—in which Indigenous Australians were an integral part of an informal international trading network—would presumably disrupt some of these. Instead, these contact stories are told in a way that strengthens and reinforces the stereotypes and geographical marginalisation of Arnhem Land and the people who live there.

One of the ways in which this was done was through the construction of Arnhem Land as an unknown, empty frontier. Part of this frontier discourse was the idealising of Arnhem Land as an untouched and exotic land. In articles published in the 1930s, it was an area of Australia represented as largely 'undiscovered'. Later on, during the 1940s, a period that saw numerous anthropological expeditions, Arnhem Land was no longer referred to as empty but instead the dangers present in an exotic landscape were emphasised: the crocodiles, the mosquitoes and the humidity.

The creation of a frontier that emphasised the violence and danger present in Arnhem Land, not only in the landscape but also as a result of the Indigenous people themselves, enabled the 'othering' of Arnhem Landers. They were

considered dangerous as a result of a series of violent incidents that were well reported in the media in the 1930s and this was blamed on the influence of 'outside' Macassan blood and culture. The dangerous and violent Arnhem Land 'Aborigine' was imagery that continued through the 1930s until the 1970s and was arguably used to justify both missionary and state intervention in Arnhem Land.

In many ways, and again attributed to the influence of Macassan culture, Indigenous people from Arnhem Land were also considered superior to other Indigenous people; their technology and culture were considered more advanced and in several places there is respect shown to their resistance of European intrusion into Arnhem Land. Even as late as 2006 Burdon in *Australian Geographic* emphasises an exotic 'other world'; not a country that has been connected to Southeast Asia for many centuries as a result of the important relationships Arnhem Landers formed with Macassan traders.

These representations and myths are all written by non-Indigenous authors. Indigenous voices, let alone authorities, are completely absent from these magazines. The violence, advanced culture and technology are all considered to be the result of centuries of Macassan contact—contact that was placed quite conveniently in the past; contact that is outside academic circles and Arnhem Land itself, where it is celebrated daily, is now rarely referred to in popular media. This analysis shows how rather than engaging with the often fraught connections forged between Macassan traders and Arnhem Landers through the centuries, popular geography drew on these connections to reinforce myths of *terra nullius* and to create a mythical northern frontier that was used to differentiate and silence the Indigenous people who lived there.

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