



Northern Australia and areas of 'Macassan' contact

Map drawn by Joan Goodrum, A.N.U.

THE LOST 'MACASSAR LANGUAGE' OF NORTHERN AUSTRALIA*

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... Macassan influence contributed merely an exotic colour to the cultural fabric of certain Aboriginal societies. While this colour might well have become more marked had the contact been more prolonged, the underlying pattern [of 'traditional' Aboriginal culture] was still very clear, even in the areas of strongest influence.¹

It has been calculated that at the time of the first white settlement 300,000 Aborigines, speaking about two hundred separate 'languages' and up to six hundred 'dialects', existed in Australia. In many areas Aborigines were bilingual and in particular areas the general population, and especially talented individuals, were multilingual in a number of languages and/or dialects. Where Aborigines and Europeans established prolonged peaceful contact, Aborigines rapidly acquired some degree of proficiency in English and words and phrases travelled beyond the frontier to, as yet, uncontacted groups. Not only did Aborigines coming into contact with Europeans gain new linguistic information from English, but also Aboriginal groups forced together by European intrusion or official policy began to learn each other's languages. A common figure in such situations (and perhaps belonging to traditions in existence before the coming of Europeans) was the linguistic virtuoso: a person, usually male but occasionally female, who had acquired a reasonable knowledge of a number of languages or dialects and who was always eager to learn more. Such people can still be encountered in Aboriginal communities today. Language acquisition has been long recognised by most Aborigines as a key which opens new worlds, establishing significant social, trading and exchange relationships and giving the speaker access to a rich corpus of profane and sacred/secret knowledge: songs, myths, ritual formulae and many other things.

Peoples from the islands to the north of Australia, today referred to as Indonesia, probably have visited the coasts of northern Australia for some time though the exact antiquity and nature of these visits is still uncertain. The best documented examples of these visits concern those of the so-called 'Macassans' who came primarily in search of trepang (*bêche de mer*). 'Macassans' is used throughout this paper to indicate Austronesian² speaking groups who visited northern Australia. While most were speakers of Macassarese from Makassar (Ujung Pandang) in southern Sulawesi, other groups were also involved, particularly in the early period of trade when crews could be multilingual and multicultural. The term 'Macassar language' (or just 'language') refers to the Aboriginal pidgin or pidgins developed mainly through contact with 'Macassans'. It is generally agreed that this contact, beginning sometime in the eighteenth century and continuing until the early years of the twentieth century, influenced the Aboriginal cultures of coastal northern Australia. The importance of the impact of this contact on the long-term nature of Aboriginal languages and cultures is the subject of this paper.³

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1 Macknight 1972:318.

2 The term Austronesian is used to refer to a family of languages which today include most of those spoken in Indonesia as well as the languages of Polynesia, Micronesia, parts of New Guinea, Formosa, mainland Southeast Asia and Madagascar.

3 Macknight 1976 deals generally with 'Macassan' enterprise in northern Australia; Macknight 1972 surveys the influences on Aborigines.

Linguistic influences from Austronesian languages have long been noted in northern Australia, particularly the survival of items of vocabulary which have been incorporated into Aboriginal languages and dialects.⁴ Deeper influences on Aboriginal linguistic usage have not been fully investigated and indeed were denied by one notable linguist.⁵ Recently Macknight (following a suggestion from Peter Sutton) has proposed that a pidgin language developed in Aboriginal communities as a means of communication with 'Macassans', though this point is made only in a footnote.⁶ For the purpose of this paper, a pidgin is a linguistic code used *between* different linguistic communities while a creole is a code used *within* one linguistic community. Frequently pidgins develop out of a language contact situation where limited communication is required (e.g. for trade purposes) and given the right sociocultural conditions this limited form of communication may expand into a creole which is a language in its own right, fulfilling all the communicative requirements of a speech community.

A closer examination of early sources shows that an Aboriginal pidgin certainly existed in north Australian communities which was used not only as a means of discourse with 'Macassans' but also as a *lingua franca* among Aboriginal groups who did not share the same language or dialect. A *lingua franca* (plural *lingue franche*) is a speech form which acts as a means of communication among speakers of varying linguistic backgrounds. The existence of this pidgin or pidgins and its use as a *lingua franca* raise new questions, not only concerning the nature of Aboriginal linguistic communities in northern Australia, but also of the impact of external contact on Aboriginal society and culture in regions influenced by 'Macassan' visitors.

The historical evidence

For the sake of brevity we have collected together in an appendix a selection of references dating from the early nineteenth to the twentieth century which refer to Aboriginal proficiency in Austronesian languages of some kind. In this section we will merely consider two of the most important sources, material collected between 1838 and 1844 by George Windsor Earl⁷ and evidence from an anthropologist, W. Lloyd Warner, who carried out detailed research in eastern Arnhem Land between 1926 and 1929. Earl was appointed 'linguist and land agent' to the British settlement of Port Essington on the Cobourg Peninsula. A perceptive observer, not only of the local Aborigines but also of the visiting 'Macassan' fleets, Earl possessed a detailed knowledge of Indonesia as he had traded in the region and visited many of the eastern islands on supply boats sailing out of Port Essington. He was a competent speaker of Malay and studied a number of other Austronesian languages.⁸ In Port Essington Earl reported that he had difficulty in collecting Aboriginal vocabularies:

After having collected many words, I found that I was making a vocabulary of a horrid *patois* of the Macassar dialect: in fact, nearly all the words the natives use when speaking with us are Macassarese.⁹

Earl provided further details, pointing out that a 'considerable portion of the coast natives have, from frequent intercourse with Macassar trepang fishers, acquired considerable proficiency in their language'.¹⁰ Earl points out that the language was used as a *lingua franca* by the Aborigines:

They [the Aborigines], however, contrive to make themselves well understood, not only by the Macassars, but by the people of tribes with whose peculiar dialect

4 Macknight 1972:295-300 gives a summary; see also Walker and Zorc 1981.

5 Capell 1965:68.

6 Macknight 1976:160 n.37; only the Berndts (1954:28 etc) previously had noted the use of what they called 'trade Macassan'. A useful discussion of the pidgins and creoles may be found in Mühlhäusler 1974.

7 For details of Earl's life and work see Gibson-Hill 1959 and the additional information in Jones 1975.

8 Gibson-Hill 1959:106.

9 Earl 1842:140 see also Appendix. The languages Earl would have been dealing with were Yiwaidja on Croker Island and adjoining coastal areas as well as a number of now extinct varieties on Cobourg Peninsula. For the distribution of languages in this area see Wurm and Hattori (1981).

10 Earl 1846a:244, see also Appendix.

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they may not be familiar. On our first arrival, the natives, from having been long accustomed to address strangers in this language, used it when conversing with us.¹¹

The fact that a separate Austronesian-based speech form existed and was used as a *lingua franca* was noted by Warner among the Yolngu, hundreds of miles from Port Essington, in eastern coastal Arnhem Land.¹² Warner states that the 'pidgin Malay dialect was spoken by most of the older men among the tribes of the Arafura coast' and that the 'language stimulated intertribal communication'.¹³ In the life history of the Aboriginal man Mahkarolla recorded by Warner, Mahkarolla frequently mentions talking 'Macassar'.¹⁴

Few of the many references to the use of the 'Macassar language' say much about the nature of the language, what it was based upon, who used it and the degree of proficiency achieved or the effects of the use of the language in and between Aboriginal communities.

The Indonesian background

It is important that we consider the possible sources of Austronesian language influence on Aboriginal languages and dialects. The Austronesian languages of the Indonesian archipelago exhibit considerable diversity, a diversity through which has been mediated in many areas by the existence of *lingue franche*.¹⁵ This use of *lingue franche* has been particularly common in coastal areas where trading languages were used. Pidgins and creoles developed from such trading languages have probably existed in the archipelago for a long period and have been a major influence on the languages in the area. When Europeans first arrived in the archipelago in the early sixteenth century they encountered a major trading language in the form of Malay. It has been argued that Malay is a creole based upon western Austronesian languages found in the coastal regions of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula which developed as a trade language among Malay trading kingdoms established in the western archipelago from the end of the fourteenth century onwards.¹⁶ In the eastern archipelago, where the Europeans discovered Malay in use as a trade language, there are indications that in the early sixteenth century it was a recent phenomenon. Antonio Galvão, writing in the Moluccas in the 1540s, noted that '[a]t present the Malayan language has come into vogue'.¹⁷

The Portuguese, the most influential European power in the archipelago in the sixteenth century, adopted Malay in their trading relationships with Austronesian speakers but they also contributed a large amount of Portuguese vocabulary to the trading languages, particularly in eastern Indonesia. There are a number of reasons why this occurred. Portuguese maritime trade had begun in Africa and later expanded to the Americas and Asia; from their earliest contact with speakers of other languages the Portuguese used a pidginized form of Portuguese¹⁸ and they increased its use in Asia. Indeed, Portuguese was to remain the major language of all European trade in Asia until the eighteenth century and large indigenous communities speaking Portuguese existed in many parts of Asia.¹⁹ Portuguese-Malay creoles developed with the archipelago²⁰ and in eastern Indonesia Portuguese influence on many Austronesian languages is still very noticeable.²¹

11 Earl 1846a:244, see also Appendix.

12 Warner 1958 (1937):456; Yolngu are an important group of languages spoken in northeastern Arnhem Land at a number of settlements and on their outstations. They will be discussed in greater detail below.

13 Warner 1958[1937]:456.

14 Warner 1958[1937]:475, 476 see also Appendix.

15 For a general discussion of *lingue franche* and pidgins in this area see Wurm 1971.

16 Benjamin (forthcoming); we are most grateful to Geoffrey Benjamin for discussing his ideas on this issue with us. For details on the rise of Malay states see Wolters 1970.

17 Jacobs 1971:75.

18 Narò 1978.

19 Lopes 1969.

20 Hancock 1975.

21 França 1971, see also Maria 1967.

The Portuguese, and later the English, Spanish and Dutch, all became involved in the trading worlds of the archipelago, disrupting native commerce, seizing entrepôts and monopolising trade goods. Indonesian merchants responded by founding new trading centres, often assisted by Europeans who were in conflict with rival European powers. Malay merchants, fleeing from the Malay entrepôt Malacca after its seizure by the Portuguese in 1511, helped develop Macassan trading states in southern Sulawesi, and increased the use of Malay in the eastern archipelago.²² The Macassan state of Goa expanded its powers into eastern Indonesia in the seventeenth century assisted by the Portuguese who were in conflict with the Dutch. The Portuguese provided the Macassarese with technical skills in maritime enterprise: boat building, navigation techniques and even boat crews.²³ While the Portuguese influence waned after 1660 when the Dutch seized Makassar,²⁴ the Macassarese and later the Buginese (also from southern Sulawesi) continued to develop their trading networks in eastern Indonesia and throughout the archipelago. The collection of trade goods and natural products became an essential part of this trading network, and northern Australia an important source of supply of trepang, tortoise shell, pearls and other products. To obtain these the Macassarese and Buginese used various Austronesian speaking groups, including independent collectors such as the Badjau (sea nomads), and later in the nineteenth century skilled Macassarese fishermen who became the mainstay of the industry.

Those Austronesian speakers who visited northern Australia thus not only spoke their own languages (often with Malay and Portuguese loan words), but also a variety of Malay heavily endowed with Portuguese loans. But we must recognise not only the complexity of the sources of Austronesian influence on Aboriginal languages and dialects but also the context in which the languages were being used. Here we must differentiate between the languages used in the major trading ports among merchants, those used by boat crews during voyages and those used by 'Macassans' in exchanges with native peoples from whom goods were obtained. Two of these are of particular interest — the *lingue franche* used on the boats and the pidgins which became the established means of communication between the boat crews and the inhabitants of the various places visited by the 'Macassans'.²⁵

It is apparent from early reports that the 'Macassan' boats in northern Australia contained multilingual crews and that various peoples along the trading routes joined the crew. The captains of the boats, though most likely native speakers of Macassarese or Buginese and perhaps knowledgeable in some of the languages of the rest of the crew, used Malay on board as an easy means of communication. Earl presents a vivid picture of the cosmopolitan nature of Port Essington one April as *praus* congregated:

... the population of the settlement became a very motley character, for then Australians of perhaps a dozen different tribes might be mixed up with natives of Celebes and Sumbawa, Badjau of the coast of Borneo, Timorese and Javanese, with an occasional sprinkling of New Guinea negroes.²⁶

Aborigines appear to have joined the *praus* voluntarily but the possibility of slavery should not be overlooked. Why Aborigines sailed on the boats, even to Indonesia, and why they were permitted to do so by the 'Macassans' remains unclear.²⁷

The pidgins which probably developed as a means of communication between native peoples and the boat crews must have been based on a language comprehensible

22 Cense 1978.

23 Meilink-Roelofs 1962:163-164.

24 Boxer 1967.

25 Collins 1937:17 notes that 'Low Malay' was commonly used in trading situations in the 1930s by Buginese maritime traders but provides no major linguistic information.

26 Earl 1846a:240.

27 The issue of religious conversion should not be overlooked. In spite of Warner's comment that the 'Macassans' had no 'desire to proselytize the aborigines to worship his gods [sic]' (1958[1937]:457), Earl reported in 1841 that 'A few [Aborigines] have been converted to Mohammedanism; one of these, Caraday, a chief of one of Goulburn's Islands, visited us soon after our arrival at Port Essington. He had been circumcised, and refused to eat pork' (1841:116).

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to the majority of the crew or at least contained a number of words or phrases used in this language.²⁸ At the time it would appear that the 'Macassans' preferred to establish long-term relationships with particular groups of people,²⁹ indeed with specific families among these people. The pidgin which developed from this intercourse therefore must owe something to the language of these Aboriginal groups.³⁰ A number of Austronesian languages, trade languages and Portuguese as well as distinctive Aboriginal languages and dialects therefore contributed to the formation of the 'Macassar' languages. As the majority of the boat crews who maintained prolonged contact with northern Australia during most of the nineteenth century were speakers of Macassarese, it is not surprising that this language appears to have been the most influential Austronesian source.³¹

The nature of 'Macassar languages' in Aboriginal communities

The degree and nature of contact between Aborigines and 'Macassans' varied considerably. In the initial situation two language groups came into contact knowing perhaps nothing about each other. Contact had to be established to exchange material goods and this no doubt developed into a more extended form of communication involving access to resources of various kinds. Extended communication would have entailed not just the exchange of items of vocabulary but also an interchange of linguistic structures and semantic concepts. Over time these could have evolved to a considerable extent. Aboriginal use of the 'languages' need not have been confined to 'Macassan' seasonal visitations but might also have been spoken among members of the community and perhaps with neighbouring Aboriginal groups who themselves may or may not have possessed some knowledge of 'Macassar'.³²

Aborigines, especially young unmarried men, who joined the boat crews either to visit other northern Australian coastal localities or to sail to more distant lands,³³ were not just passengers but also were involved in sailing *praus*.³⁴ On such journeys the Aborigines would have become more accustomed to the 'boat-language' used by the crew and thus increased their proficiency in the 'Macassar language'. The use of the 'boat-language' would have introduced them to the technical vocabulary of the sailors. This might help to account for the presence of such 'Macassan' loan words in north Australian languages as boat, directional and locational terms and, interestingly, the apparent concern with wind directions, particularly in ritual contexts.³⁵

Those Aborigines who travelled to major population centres in Indonesia, Makassar in particular, experienced long-term contact with speakers of other languages. Some Aborigines apparently stayed for years in Makassar or elsewhere before returning home and even if they returned with the next fleet, this would have entailed waiting for the following season's sailing. While in Makassar Aborigines normally lived with the captain's family. Individuals who were interested in other languages and dialects could undoubtedly have learnt Macassarese or Buginese if it were the language of the household. While sailing on *praus* or visiting other language groups Aborigines, being interested in other languages, could have noticed language differences and possibly gained some knowledge

28 We must not forget that the 'Macassans' may have used a pidgin developed from their experiences in contact with native peoples elsewhere, e.g. Papua or other Aboriginal groups, when making new contacts with Aborigines, thereby incorporating aspects of these languages into the pidgins.

29 See, for example, Warner 1958[1937]:457.

30 Undoubtedly, the Aborigines acquired a knowledge of, and proficiency in, the language of the 'Macassans' at a faster rate and to a greater degree than the 'Macassans' learnt about the Aborigines — see Earl 1842:140: 'The Macassars, although nearly all the natives on the coast speak their language, know even less about the natives than we do, simply from their not taking the trouble to inquire'.

31 Walker and Zorc 1981.

32 There are indications in the literature, e.g. Searcy, that groups who had little contact with 'Macassans' as well as those in conflict with them possessed a knowledge of the 'Macassar languages', but it is unclear how this was acquired.

33 Earl 1841:116, 1846:118 [in Appendix].

34 Tobing 1961:152 notes that Buginese maritime law states that all those on board, even passengers, were considered part of the crew.

35 Macknight 1972:298-300; Walker and Zorc 1981.

of them.³⁶ Aboriginal proficiency in Austronesian languages would thus have varied considerably from group to group and from individual to individual. Those groups who had established extensive contact with the 'Macassans', or whose members had gained linguistic expertise on board boats or in foreign parts, would have developed an extended pidgin but those Aborigines who had minimal contact with 'Macassans', or who had acquired their pidgin from neighbouring Aboriginal groups, would have possessed a restricted pidgin.

We must differentiate therefore, between Aboriginal 'Macassar languages' developed, sustained and perhaps expanded by annual contact with 'Macassans' and those developed between Aboriginal groups as a *lingua franca*. The extent of Aboriginal use of 'Macassar languages', their role within communities and between communities as well as the effects they had on Aboriginal groups in northern Australia must be considered separately.

A pidgin or a creole?

While the direct linguistic relationships between Aborigines and 'Macassans' are of considerable interest, the relationships between different Aboriginal language groups using the 'Macassar languages' as *lingue franche* are of special importance.³⁷ The 'Macassar languages', created for 'Macassan'/Aboriginal communication, were developed and used for other purposes. Some of these, such as a common language between different language groups, are well documented, but other uses, for example as secret esoteric forms of discourse, can only be postulated. Whether this development of the 'Macassar languages' for purely Aboriginal functions occurred within Aboriginal communities, or where different language groups came into contact, is difficult to elucidate. It would seem reasonable to assume that Aborigines in the same language or dialect groups would have little recourse to 'Macassar language' among themselves. Neighbouring groups speaking different languages or dialects who had already established contact before the arrival of the 'Macassans', were also unlikely to adopt another medium for communication. Therefore the most common use of the 'Macassar language' was probably between communities where little or no contact had previously existed. Such new contacts through the use of a shared language helped generate new exchanges and access to new forms of knowledge and Aboriginal languages.

Aborigines taken along the north Australian coast by 'Macassans', far away from their own 'country', would have met speakers of different Aboriginal languages, though such contacts were unlikely to have been sustained. Aborigines inhabiting coastal areas, however, did have a means of communication using bark canoes and could have spread 'Macassar' languages to distant coastal and island groups not in contact with 'Macassans'. This coastal voyaging was greatly enhanced in both frequency and scale by the use of the dug-out canoes equipped with sails. Both items of technology were introduced through Aboriginal contact with the 'Macassans'.³⁸ These new boats were probably first used by Aboriginal groups who had acquired the 'Macassar language', at least before the new boat technology spread to other non-contacted groups along the coasts of Arnhem Land.

'Macassan'/Aboriginal contacts along the coasts were often localised, being restricted to particular groups of Aborigines. In such situations the 'language' which developed as a means of communication between them acquired its own distinctive, local features. At the same time there were areas where 'Macassan'/Aboriginal contact was infrequent or non-existent as a consequence of the uneven distribution of suitable trepanning areas or

36 There is evidence of this language contact and Aboriginal interest. Stokes 1846a:61 reported that Earl had told him in Port Essington that he had 'overheard one of them [i.e. an Aboriginal] talking with a Ceramese man in the New Guinea dialect, being evidently mistaken by the Ceramese for a Papuan'; see also Tindale's comments on the linguistic knowledge of the old man Yambukwa whom he met on Grootte Eylandt in the early 1920s (1925-6:130, see also Appendix). Macknight (1972:286) refers to a report (reproduced in Macknight 1981) concerning an Aboriginal encountered in 1875 in Caledon Bay (eastern Arnhem Land) who could speak a few words of English learnt in Singapore, which he had visited on a *prau*!

37 This was one of the most linguistically diverse areas in Australia with a high Aboriginal population and a large number of separate languages and language-families; see Wurm 1972, Dixon 1980 on this point.

38 Warner 1958[1937]:456-457.

the hostility of particular Aboriginal groups to 'Macassans'; Aboriginal groups in these circumstances might have learnt little or none of the 'Macassar language'. An Aboriginal with knowledge of the 'Macassar language' who chose to voyage along the coast would therefore have encountered a variety of groups, ranging from those with no knowledge of the 'Macassar language' to groups with a highly developed, though perhaps rather different form of the 'language'. In the development of the 'Macassar language' into a *lingua franca* in specific areas the nature and intensity of contact need to be considered. Groups sharing a well developed pidgin acquired through extensive contact, though with different groups of 'Macassans', could have maintained a fairly high level of communication and also have developed and perhaps standardized their pidgins by sharing common features of their experience of the 'Macassar language'. On the other hand, groups possessing poorly developed pidgins or where the association was asymmetrical (i.e. where a developed pidgin meets poor pidgin), might have created a more impoverished form of the 'Macassar language', or at least one with considerable borrowings from the Aboriginal languages or dialects involved. At the present time we can say very little about this subject and can only recognize that the situation must have been complex and altered over time. But there do appear to have been regions of intensive 'Macassan'/Aboriginal contact and through the use of 'Macassar language' a development of intensive Aboriginal/Aboriginal contact, while in the areas separating these regions no such developments took place. The significance of this will be discussed in the next section.

The question we must consider here is whether or not the highly developed forms of *lingua franca* 'Macassar languages' reached a stage of use and complexity where they might be considered as 'creoles'. The arguments against the 'Macassar languages' becoming creolized are stronger than those in its favour; the scanty evidence we possess on the use of the 'Macassar languages' as *lingue franche* tends to support this view. It is useful, however, to consider both sides of the argument.

Arnhem Land consists today of numerous and radically different Aboriginal languages³⁹ and the situation was probably equally complex upon first 'Macassan'/Aboriginal contact. This situation would have encouraged the creation of a common creole. The 'Macassar language' could also have provided a 'neutral ground' for easy and rapid contact between distant and disparate Aboriginal language groups, visited perhaps less frequently than others. The use of the 'Macassar language' as a common means of communication could have helped to preserve and to protect the native languages of the various groups which were often jealously guarded as inherited property and markers of identity for the groups possessing them.

The arguments against the formation of a creole centre particularly around Aboriginal attitudes to the importance of acquiring other Aboriginal languages. Discourse in the 'Macassar languages' was, in this sense, certainly restricted. Not all members of the visited communities could speak or comprehend the *lingua franca*; certain men for some reason may never have learnt more than a few basic words,⁴⁰ and most women and children would have had little use for it. The 'Macassar language' had developed for the fulfilment of specific, restricted functions, mainly the exchange of material goods. Visitors who had to place themselves within the social categories of the host community and learn an unfamiliar etiquette of that community could only have done so through learning something of the local indigenous languages or dialect. The same is true if they wished to enter into, or obtain details of, the ritual repertoire of the host community; the 'Macassar language' was primarily a secular language, though in particular circumstances aspects of it could have taken on a sacred character.

It would seem on balance, therefore, that while the 'Macassar language' may have been extremely useful as a means for initial contact between different language groups there were forces at work which encouraged individuals and groups after contact was established to gain some insight into each other's languages. This would have discouraged the development of the 'Macassar languages' into a creole. There is one final point worth considering in this context. The widespread use of the 'Macassar language' was probably

39 For instance see Elwell 1977.

40 Warner 1958[1937]:456.

more intensive among coastal communities than among inland groups. Most coastal communities, however, certainly had contacts with inland groups either on a permanent or a seasonal basis. The contact of coastal groups with 'Macassans' and their supply of new material goods, the adoption of the 'Macassar language' and consequent intensification of contact and exchange among coastal communities had important implications for inland Aborigines. The acquisition of languages of other coastal groups also provided coastal Aborigines with access to new inland groups. 'Macassan' influences thus might be experienced by Aborigines who had never seen or met a real 'Macassan' in coastal Arnhem Land.

Impact and reaction

The most obvious 'Macassan' influences on Aboriginal groups can be seen in their adoption of items of material culture, many of which have survived until the present, and loan words still in use in Aboriginal languages and dialects. Other influences which affected Aboriginal communities less directly or which have become well integrated into the cultures are more difficult to discern. The problem centres around what we mean by the term 'influences'; too often this is assumed to mean 'borrowings' in a direct sense rather than as a stimulation or partial adoption through a reinterpretation of existing forms. Aboriginal culture is innovative and probably was so in the past. What exists in the present is not just a survival of unchanging patterns.⁴¹ Mere tabulations of assumed cultural connections based on surviving patterns are an insult to Aboriginal creativity. The important questions to consider in assessing the impact and reaction of 'Macassans' on Aboriginal cultures are not those involving how or where influences occurred on separate aspects of Aboriginal culture but the effects of the contacts on the *total* pattern of existence. The issues which must be confronted are how quickly the effects and influences of these contacts became integrated into Aboriginal life and when and how they became interpreted as something indigenous. Therefore attempts to provide a comprehensive listing of particularly 'Macassan' influences from present-day Aboriginal cultures may be impossible and indeed such attempts may obfuscate the real impact on and reaction of Aborigines to external contacts.

It is difficult to recognise clearly the effects of 'Macassan' contact on present day Aboriginal languages. The use of the 'Macassar languages' as a means of general discourse rather than just as items of vocabulary mixed with established Aboriginal languages and dialects, and the fact that the 'Macassar languages' were used as *lingue franche* across existing linguistic 'barriers', must have important implications for any linguistic study carried out today in northern Australia. Consideration of this issue had only just begun. We would suggest that instead of considering merely lexical items attention should be focussed on the diffusion of syntactic and semantic material.⁴²

It has long been recognised by anthropologists and linguists that the linguistic and cultural situation in north-eastern Arnhem Land is extremely complex and different from many other areas of Australia. Schebeck⁴³ has designated the 'languages' and peoples of this area by the term 'Yolngu',⁴⁴ and this has been widely adopted. The Yolngu form a Pama-Nyungan enclave which has become isolated through a 'combination of migrations ... [and is now] ... separated geographically from the remainder of the Pama-Nyungan groups'.⁴⁵ Whatever the historical situation was in the very distant past, the

41 This view is contrary to some established anthropological opinion (but see Stanner 1979). We have not space to examine the arguments here, but merely point out that in terms of lexicon words are not just borrowed but the semantic concepts are adapted and developed, exploiting the lexical resources of the language. This has very important sociocultural implications in itself.

42 Such an approach would be the logical extension from the rich lexical data presented by Walker and Zorc 1981.

43 Schebeck n.d.

44 Based on the word for 'human, man, Aboriginal'.

45 Heath 1978:12. Pama-Nyungan is the name of the proposed parent language of most Australian languages covering some five-sixths of the Australian continent. The name is derived from two words for 'man' found at extreme points of the proposed family: *pama* in Cape York and *nyunga* in the southwest of Western Australia. Non-Pama-Nyungan families, of which there are some twenty-seven, are found in the Kimberleys and the 'Top End' of the Northern Territory, with the exception of the enclave of the Yolngu. For further discussion see Wurm 1972 and Dixon 1980.

Yolngu group today has little in common in structure or vocabulary with neighbouring non-Pama-Nyuugan languages. Within the Yolngu group there exists a complex socio-cultural-linguistic situation, which is still not fully understood. In the Yolngu situation there are a very large number of dialect variations, differentiated often by minor linguistic features, sometimes associated with socio-cultural segmentation apparently the consequence of 'conscious' social differentiation.⁴⁶

The problem is to explain how this situation came about. Current interpretations depend upon viewing the Yolngu situation without a historical dimension. The complex of dialects had been interpreted as a consequence of ecological, demographic or social factors.⁴⁷ We suggest that while these may be important, the situation is the result of historical processes in which contact of coastal groups with 'Macassans' and the use of the 'Macassar languages' play an important role.

We can postulate only very generally what the linguistic situation among the present day groups making up the Yolngu complex may have been before 'Macassan' contact. There probably existed a number of languages or dialects which were once quite closely related but which were in a process of continuing differentiation. The impact of 'Macassan' contact was felt initially in selected coastal areas. The development of the 'Macassar languages', which we assume was quite rapid, spread the 'languages' between coastal communities as outlined above. The spread of the 'Macassar languages' would have led first to an expansion and intensification of social and cultural exchanges and later linguistic interchange between coastal groups and those inland communities where contacts had existed before 'Macassan' contact. The 'Macassar languages' played an important role in these links, at least initially, though we can assume that where contacts became firmly established, communities acquired some degree of proficiency in each other's languages and dialects.

Contacts between coastal and inland communities were slower to develop and based less upon the use of the 'Macassar language' as a means of common discourse and more upon cognates shared by closely related language groups. The impetus for the creation and maintenance of contacts between coastal peoples and between coastal and inland groups was probably manifold. One of the most important factors was the dissemination of new items of material culture acquired by coastal groups from the 'Macassans'. Other things which may have been exchanged were indigenous customs and ritual knowledge, some of which have been stimulated by contact with 'Macassans' or developed through the intensification of social contact between Aboriginal coastal groups. The coastal groups, possessing a monopoly in valuable trade items obtained from 'Macassans' — iron, glass, cloth, tobacco⁴⁸ — much in demand by inland groups, possessed an advantage in these exchanges. Inland groups, however, also possessed items which coastal groups lacked. Thomson's accounts, recorded in the 1930s, a generation after 'Macassan' voyaging had ceased, indicate that intense ceremonial exchange cycles uniting various Yolngu groups in eastern Arnhem Land still existed.⁴⁹

The consequences of the development of intense and expanded trading and ceremonial exchange cycles would have varied from area to area depending upon the intensity and nature of the exchanges and the forms of contact. In social and cultural terms this could have implied a break-down of older social forms of differentiation. In terms of the languages and dialects of the area there could have been increased linguistic diffusion and interchange through the acquisition and use of other dialects and languages and through the greater exchange of women in marriage between distant speech communities. This in turn may have led to a break-down of language and dialect differentiation. The present day Yolngu situation could well be the result of these manifold changes. The sociocultural-dialect differentiation in existence today could be

46 Morphy 1977.

47 This assumption lies behind a number of works published by linguists and anthropologists and has directed a major human biology programme in Arnhem Land. e.g. White 1978.

48 See Macknight 1972 for a listing of these items.

49 Thomson 1949; interestingly in 1841 Earl reported that the 'Macassans' in Port Essington told him that the Aborigines in the Gulf of Carpentaria were good trading partners and 'drive a brisk trade' (1841:116). These were probably Yolngu.

the result of more recent (post-'Macassan') historical processes or the development of forms of cultural and social differentiation in the more distant past as attempts by particular groups to maintain their identity in the face of the break-down of older, established patterns.

Warner, who was eager to separate what he considered 'traditional' from 'contact' culture, restricted most of his discussion of 'Macassan' influence to an isolated appendix in his book. However, early in his main account he briefly notes the influence of the 'Macassans' on Yolngu social structure:

... the Malay's advent ... provides sufficient explanation for the breakdown of the earlier tribal grouping — which, if similar to that of the present-day tribes was a very weak manifestation at best — and for the formation of a larger Murngin [*i.e.* Yolngu] group.⁵⁰

Thomson recognised the important social implications of the ceremonial exchange cycles in creating alliances and altering social groups and these he attributed to 'Macassan' stimulus:

But while the *kumur mārnda*⁵¹ relationship exists throughout the whole of Arnhem Land, and while the ceremonial exchange cycle draws *gerrri*⁵² from far beyond this region, there is evidence for the belief that it was the visits of Macassar voyagers, who brought articles of great material and social value, which gave a special impetus and furnished the 'drive', not only for the circulation of *gerrri* over hundreds of miles of country, but which did much to overcome also the organised 'opposition' between clans.⁵³

Although Thomson said nothing about the effects of this exchange on the language and dialect situation, it undoubtedly was involved and use of the 'Macassar language' may indeed have acted as a catalyst in the establishment of the exchange system.

Other areas, other times

Though the Yolngu area of northeastern Arnhem Land was a region of intense contact it was not the only region influenced by 'Macassan' visitors and it is of interest to consider whether effects similar to those experienced by the Yolngu occurred in other areas. Two regions can be identified: firstly the Cobourg Peninsula and nearby islands and secondly Groote Eylandt and the mainland communities southwards along the Gulf of Carpentaria including the Sir Edward Pellew group of islands.

It is difficult from the existing evidence to reconstruct the language and socio-cultural situation in the Cobourg Peninsula though it may well have resembled aspects of the Yolngu. There are dialect variations and a tradition of considerable interaction between the groups.⁵⁴ The Peninsula and island situation, perhaps as a result of its restricted geography was far more localised than the Yolngu, yet contacts with inland groups do appear to have developed, particularly along the Alligator River which provided access to the interior and the large Gunwinyguan language area.⁵⁵ Port Essington Aborigines in the service of Europeans in the 1850s and 1860s had few qualms about guiding Europeans into the interior of this region and had peaceful relations with most Aboriginal groups encountered, communicating easily with them.⁵⁶

50 Warner 1958[1937]:38.

51 Translated by Thomson as 'breast to breast those two' *i.e.* a close trade-partnership involving a strong obligation to return prestations.

52 Translated by Thomson as "goods" or "possessions" *i.e.* material wealth.

53 Thomson 1949:83-84. It is interesting that Harney (1957:137) argues that the cessation of 'Macassan' contact was to have a profound effect on Yolngu society, altering the relationships between groups and leaving a sense of bitterness towards Europeans whom the Aborigines blamed for the ending of the annual visits.

54 First noted by the Italian priest Angelo Confalonieri in Earl's time (see Soravia 1975) and confirmed by more recent research.

55 Gunwinyguan is one of the Non-Pama-Nyungan families (see fn.45) spoken in Arnhem Land. It is radically different in linguistic terms from the Yolngu group of languages which are part of the Pama-Nyungan family.

56 See the early reports of the surveying and exploratory voyages of the schooner *Beatrice* in the 1860s (South Australia 1865); see also the account of Timbo in 1839 reported by Earl 1846a:245 and Macknight 1976:86.

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In this area too there were extended ceremonial exchange cycles again heavily influenced by 'Macassan' contacts.⁵⁷ Earl noticed at Port Essington that:

All the clothes, iron, axes, etc., that the natives of the coast have taken from us goes into the interior, and I cannot discover that they get anything in exchange but spears, and perhaps food.⁵⁸

The pattern in western Arnhem Land thus could be called a restricted Yolngu situation.

The Groote Eylandt and southern region is more complex. The area of 'Macassan' influences were restricted due to the uneven distribution of good trepanging grounds which were found mainly around Groote and the southern islands. The area of mainland in between appears to have been a poor trepanging area and 'Macassan'/Aboriginal contact was less frequent. This does not mean that inter-Aboriginal contact was non-existent but that it was less frequent and less integrated than among the Yolngu and the Aborigines around the Cobourg Peninsula. The Yolngu ceremonial exchange cycles, however, extended beyond the boundaries of the Yolngu languages area and iron spears from the north were exchanged as far south as the Roper River.⁵⁹ The stimulus of these exchanges may have contributed to the patterns of linguistic diffusion in this 'region' recently outlined by Heath,⁶⁰ though the exact role of indirect 'Macassan' influences is difficult to discern. Perhaps it might be termed a pre-Yolngu situation.⁶¹

Very little can be said concerning the influences of 'Macassan' contact in the Kimberleys as the sources are few and difficult to interpret. The 'Macassans' certainly visited the Kimberleys regularly. They called the region *Kai Jawa* and a particularly valuable form of trepang was obtained in the area.⁶² There were considerable difficulties in collecting trepang off the Kimberleys as compared with Arnhem Land. The weather conditions off the coast could make sailing dangerous⁶³ and the rocky coastline afforded few safe anchorages. Contact between 'Macassans' and Aborigines appears to have been quite violent in many places; with so few safe and friendly places to land the 'Macassans' lacked bases to prepare the trepang and to obtain essential fresh food and water.⁶⁴ There are signs, however, that in places forms of 'Macassar language' did develop and the Aborigines were affected by these contacts.

So far we have restricted the discussion to 'Macassan' influences; that is, to those areas which sometime between the eighteenth and early twentieth century were visited by boats mainly from Makassar. But there are indications of other, earlier visits by 'Indonesians' to northern Australia. The Berndts⁶⁵ have published descriptions of Aboriginal accounts of *two* foreign groups in northern Arnhem Land, the 'Macassans' and an earlier group called *Baini*. Although dismissed by Macknight,⁶⁶ this Aboriginal distinction might have some historical validity.

The other major area to consider in terms of possible earlier contacts is the region around Port Keats in the Northern Territory. Along the coast are extensive stands of tamarind (a sign of 'Macassan' sites in Arnhem Land). Some of the people physically resemble 'Malays' and the Aborigines can give accounts of people they term in Murinbata *Kardu Malayany* who visited the region.⁶⁷ Very brief archaeological surveys of the area have failed to locate any 'Macassan' sites⁶⁸ and there are, to our knowledge, no European

57 Berndt 1951:171 note 28; Berndt's material, collected long after the end of 'Macassan' voyaging and the alteration of exchange routes through European incursions to the south and west, is based on information collected mainly in Gunwinygu territory.

58 Earl 1842:140.

59 Thomson 1949:83.

60 Heath 1978.

61 Marie Reay (pers. comm.) has pointed out to us that our hypothesis might work for the Borroloola area in the Gulf country where there is a diversity of language groups, a tradition of coastal people being dominant in trading relationships and signs of 'Macassan' activity on the islands of the Gulf.

62 Earl 1863:177.

63 Earl 1863:177.

64 The difficulty of access to good water makes the reference of Ryder 1936 [see Appendix] more intriguing.

65 Berndt and Berndt 1954:Chapter 5.

66 Macknight 1972:313, 1976:92; however, Macknight also suggests that the *Baini* need further investigation (1976:161 n.48) and we hope to take up this subject elsewhere.

67 See text and discussion in Walsh (in press).

68 Mulvaney 1966.

records of 'Macassan' visits and no recorded 'Macassan' statements of exploitation of resources in the region. It would appear that the Port Keats region, and perhaps other areas of northern Australia, were visited by Austronesian speakers before the 'Macassan' trepanning fleets made annual visits to northern Australia. The confirmation of these visits and the dates when they occurred await further research, particularly archaeological investigation.

The interesting point about the Aborigines of the Port Keats region is that the language and socio-cultural situation is also extremely complex yet it differs from northeastern Arnhem Land. Here a large number of separate linguistic groups inhabit a small geographical area. The differences in languages are not at a dialect level but are differences of languages and language family. There were once ceremonial exchange cycles in the region, though by the time they were recorded by Stanner⁶⁹ they had been considerably disrupted by European intrusion. However, Stanner notes that the system was once extremely widespread and intensive. We may be seeing here a post-Yolngu situation in which contact with outsiders had stimulated linguistic, social and cultural exchanges leading to an unusual diversity of languages and cultures. With a cessation of external influence the exchanges probably altered and the linguistic and social communities became separated, leading to greater language differentiation.

In the title to this paper the 'Macassar language' is described as 'lost'. This is because in northern Australia today, and perhaps for the last fifty years, the language has not been used as a general form of discourse. Today probably only a handful of old men can recall some of it. The reason for the 'language's' rapid decline and demise is clear. In 1906 the South Australian government, which controlled the Northern Territory, prohibited 'Macassan' visits to the northern coasts.⁷⁰ With the end of the annual visits Aborigines were denied access to 'Macassan' goods brought in the boats and the use of 'Macassar languages' in communication with the crews.

The 'Macassar languages' were, however, already in decline by 1906. From the 1860s onwards European influence increased in the Northern Territory. Initially this occurred in coastal areas as various boats, throughout the year, plied the coasts carrying goods to settlements and exploiting the resources of the region. In the early period the European presence appears to have strengthened and perhaps extended use of 'Macassar languages'. Aborigines from the Port Essington area who possessed a knowledge of both English and 'Macassar languages' were employed by Europeans as interpreters with the various coastal groups.⁷¹ Eventually, however, a knowledge of English became more important than a knowledge of the 'Macassar languages' for Aborigines, particularly as inland areas were opened up, and cattle stations were founded. English, unlike the 'Macassar languages', was not just a means of communication needed to gain access to trade items; it was the language of European domination and power and Aborigines needed to master it in order to survive.

It is possible that certain features of the 'Macassar languages' can still be recovered in northern Australia.⁷² It is highly desirable that work be undertaken immediately. The major linguistic work, however, will have to be done in other fields, particularly into the influence of the 'Macassar languages' on surviving Aboriginal languages. This is a complex problem⁷³ as it will involve not only an investigation of the lexicon, syntax and semantics of *Aboriginal* languages but also of Austronesian languages to identify common features. An examination of Macassarese is essential but other eastern Indonesian languages should not be neglected.

69 Stanner 1933.

70 Macknight 1976.

71 See Appendix for detailed references. The role of Port Essington Aborigines in the spread of the 'Macassar languages' needs further investigation.

72 Frances Morphy (pers. comm.) reports that an old man in Yirrkala claims to speak 'Macassar'; she thinks some of the words resemble Portuguese.

73 The work of Dutton (1978a, 1978b, 1980) on the trading languages of the Papuan Gulf and their recent decline has many parallels with the loss of the 'Macassar languages', and may provide useful hints for further research in Australia.

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An appreciation of the deeper influences of these foreign contacts on Aboriginal cultures in northern Australia also awaits proper study. The starting point for such a study must begin with an appreciation of the central role of language in establishing and maintaining contact with the Austronesian speakers, in diffusing influences emanating from such contacts to other Aboriginal communities, and the subsequent stimulation and development of Aboriginal languages and cultures. Most of the areas of influence have been isolated and identified in recent years; they now need to be analysed and integrated into a comprehensive picture which recognises clearly the significance of 'Macassan' contact.

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APPENDIX

Sources referring to the existence of 'Malay' pidgin(s) in northern Australia

The following list of references and quotations from the literature is included merely to alert the reader to the existence of the pidgin(s) and Aboriginal use of 'Austronesian' languages over a long period of time. They are culled from independent sources. The first date indicates the date of publication, the date in square brackets that of the recording of the data, followed by the place.

Arnhem Land and Cobourg Peninsula

- 1841 [late 1830s, early 1840s] Port Essington
Nearly every prahu on leaving the coast takes two or three natives to Macassar, and brings them back next season. The consequence is that many of the natives all along the coast speak the Macassar dialect of the Malayan language (Earl 1841:116).
- 1842 [letter dated 1840] Port Essington
You ask for vocabularies. I am in the most ridiculous perplexity about them. After having collected many words, I found that I was making a vocabulary of a horrid *patois* of the Macassar dialect: in fact, nearly all the words the natives use when speaking with us are Macassarese . . . Now the natives of the Arasura [sic] Islands [near New Guinea], though speaking dialects . . . in which scarcely a single Malay word is to be found, readily acquire a perfect knowledge of the Malay language, with a correct pronunciation, although the learner be far advanced in years, while the natives of Australia make the most shocking jargon of it: witness a specimen: Macassar is pronounced Munkajerra; Karadz, Karridja; Bras, Bareja; in fact, they can neither pronounce the letter s nor the letter f (Earl 1842:140).
- 1846 [early 1840s] Port Essington
A very considerable portion of the *coast* natives have, from frequent intercourse with the Macassar trepang fishers, acquired considerable proficiency in their language, which is a dialect of the Polynesian. They never, indeed, speak it correctly, from their inability to pronounce the letter s, which occurs rather frequently in the Macassar language. Thus *berasa* becomes "bereja", *trussan* [turutan in Earl 1853:223] "turulan", *salat* "jala", etc. They, however, contrive to make themselves well understood, not only by the Macassars, but by the people of the

tribes with whose peculiar dialect they may not be familiar. On our first arrival, the natives, from having been long accustomed to address strangers in this language, used it when conversing with us, and the consequence was, that some vocabularies were collected which consisted almost entirely of this patois, under the supposition that it was the language of the aborigines (Earl 1846a:244; reprinted with correction indicated above in Earl 1853:223).

- 1846 [late 1830s, early 1840s] Port Essington
A considerable number [of the Aborigines] have paid one or more visits to Macassar, residing there for months together, which has familiarized them with the language and manners of the people of that country, and may probably lead to a closer intercourse, should the Macassars establish themselves upon the coast (Earl 1846b:118).
- 1846 [as above] Port Essington
Those first [items of Aboriginal vocabulary] made out at Port Essington, were found to be half Malay words, and of any meaning rather than what they were supposed to convey (Stokes 1846, Vol. 2:22-3 based partially on information provided by Earl).
- 1853 [1849] Port Essington [then abandoned]
The native of Northern Australia is intelligent and apt. His intelligence is manifested both in the daily concerns of life, and in the acquisition of languages. Many of the natives speak two or three dialects; and some, in addition, speak English and Malay fluently (Keppel 1853:157, *see also* Keppel's comments on the 'fluent' use of English by an Aboriginal 1853:158).
- 1865 Near Croker Island
I did not hear them [the Aborigines] make use of any English words, except in repeating them after our men, but they kept crying out several Malay expressions, apparently without knowing their meaning (South Australia, House of Assembly. *Marine Survey of Northern Territory* 1865:2).
- 1874 [1871-2] Trepang Bay
The natives trade with the Malays to a considerable extent, and many of them can speak both English and Malay (Wildey 1874:135).
- 1881 All natives round the coast, from the Cobourg Peninsula to the mouth of the Roper River, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, speak the Malay language, acquired by long intercourse with trepang fishers from Macassar, who visit the coast in their prahus during the rainy season, and employ the natives as divers, &c. (Foelsche 1881:2).
- 1886-87 [1884]
(a) Blue Mud Bay
While exploring Bluemud bay we managed, after considerable trouble, to communicate with the natives. Nearly all of them spoke the Macassar tongue, and from them we learned that they were expecting the Malays down soon on their annual visit for trepang fishing (Carrington 1886-87:65).
(b) Goyder River
[Carrington recognises an Aboriginal who was a member of a group which had earlier attempted to spear him] He saw he was recognised, and protested in the Macassar tongue that he had nothing to do with it, as they had been induced to leave their shelter by professions of friendship (Carrington 1886-87:70).
- 1905 [1880s and 1890s] Arnhem Land coast
All the coast natives spoke Macassar (Searcy 1905:10).
- 1908 [1907] Croker Island
Steamed eastward a few miles to a low sand point on the south-east end of Croker Island . . . About 20 semi-civilised blacks were seen, and one who could speak Macassar was taken on board to act as interpreter with the blacks further east,

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where, through the visit of the Malays' proas, they have become familiar with that language. Malay canoes are used by these blacks (Brown 1908:3).

- 1908 [1907] Goulburn Island
Steamed on to South Goulburn Island . . . From this place another black, who understood Macassar, was shipped (Brown 1908:4).
- 1909 [1880s and 1890s] Arnhem Land coast
These boys [from Port Essington area] spoke good English, Macassar, and, of course, their own language. That is a good indication of their intelligence. I might mention that all the coast niggers to the eastward [of Port Darwin], from their long association with the Malays, spoke Macassar, therefore I always took Port Essington boys with me on my trips, so as to make friends with the Myalls — the wild natives (Searcy 1909:36).
- 1912 [1880s and 1890s] Limba Jona [Melville Bay, outside port]
In the morning we landed to have a look around, but had barely done so, when out of the jungle at the back of the beach came about twenty black men waving their arms and singing out in Macassar [The Aborigines in fact attacked the Europeans, who replied with gunshot, stunning an Aboriginal, who was made captive]. When he opened his wild eyes Boom and Rippy [Port Essington Aborigines] plied him with questions in Macassar . . . (Searcy 1912:196-7).
- 1918 [1907] Off Groote Eylandt
We saw several natives on shore, and two came off in a fine dug-out canoe which they propelled with powerful strokes. They were large, well-made men in splendid condition, but understood no word of English except the magic word 'Tabak'. We found from John Wesley, who includes some knowledge of Malay among his accomplishments, that the few words they used were Malay. They asked for rice in Malay, and we gave them some (White 1918:145).
- 1925-26 [1921-22] Groote Eylandt
Several of the old men of the Ingura [Enindhilyagwa] tribe, as youths, made voyages with the Malays, principally to Macassar, who regularly visited the North Australian coast until about twenty-five years ago, and are familiar with the language of Macassar, with sometimes a smattering of other languages, such as Bugi [Buginese] and Malay . . . One very old Bartalumbu man, Yambukwa by name, was taken away before initiation, and spent many years in various foreign places, returning as a middle-aged man . . . He told us of woolly-haired Papuans, of Timor Laut, Macassar, Ké, Aru, Banda, and many other places which I could not recognize by his names or descriptions. With the aid of one of our crew, a Macassar-Torres Strait half-caste, who conversed fluently with him, something was learned about the visits of the Malays (Tindale 1925-26:130).
- 1936 [early 1890s] North of Groote Eylandt, most likely Woodah Island
To our great surprise the blacks began talking Malay fluently to our men [the pearling lugger crew, out from Torres Strait, included Malays], and they accepted the position quietly when told that they were not allowed on board. They said that Malays often came in their prahus from their own country, to fish for bech-de-mer and catch hawksbill turtles, from which the ordinary tortoise-shell of commerce is procured (Ellis 1936:130).
- 1937 [1926-1929]
Warner 1958 (edition): 456 for references to 'pidgin Malay' and its use as a *lingua franca*.
From the life story of Mahkarolla:
There was a black man on board [the European lugger]. He belonged to the tribe of Cape Don . . . He talked Macassar. We could talk Macassar, too. We did not talk his language, and he could not talk ours. Macassar was always the language black men talked when they could not understand each other's language (Warner 1958:475).

- 1957 [1930s]
 Stone Age men are born linguists, and not only is their speech gramatically correct, but youths amuse themselves by conversing in some little-known dialect. Old Wonggu occasionally introduced a Macassar sentence into ordinary conversation so as to puzzle me, and he would enjoy his joke in using this dialect learnt fifty years previously from East Indian traders (Chaseling 1957:50).
- 1972 [1960s?] Groote Eylandt
 I was a big boy when my father used to tell me about the Macassans, and I learned some words in their language when I heard them talking to my father (The Macassan memories of Galiawa Nalanbayayaya Wurramarra recorded by Judith Stokes in Cole 1972:5).

Kimberleys

References to 'Macassan'/Aboriginal contacts in the Kimberleys are very rare and so it is not surprising that very little has been written about language links. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that linguistic research in the Kimberleys, particularly among northern coastal Aboriginal groups, has hardly begun.

- 1936 [1930s] Kings Sound particularly Montgomery Islands.
 An unsubstantiated report by Ryder (1936:33) has Aborigines using Portuguese terms for water, body parts, dingo and ship structures. The Portuguese terms, if proved, may derive from Malay trade languages.
- 1973 [1960s] Bardi Island
 Robinson (1973:299 note 11) reports that the kinship term for wife's brother *jago* was borrowed from 'Malays' and that a number of Bardi claimed proficiency in 'Malay'. Robinson does not indicate the source, but they could have learnt 'Malay' with the pearling fleets at Broome rather than from 'Macassans'.

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