

Contact before 1788

The nature of contact between Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders and others, for example, the Macassans and the Europeans, and the effects of these interactions on, for example families and the environment (ACHHK080)



Time line

1500–1906

Macassan trepang fishermen visit the north coast of Australia

1606

Willem Janz arrives in the Cape York region of Qld. Conflict between Wik people and Dutch sailors breaks out

1623

Dutch Jan Carstenz's sailors and Aboriginal people in northern Australia have armed encounters

1642

Abel Tasman sees fires on Tasmania. People are heard but no-one is seen

1770

Captain Cook encounters Aboriginal people in the Sydney region

1788

The First Fleet arrives to set up the first British colony in New South Wales

EARLY CONTACTS

Teacher information

Elaboration

Investigating contact with Aboriginal people before 1788.

Key inquiry questions

What was the nature and consequence of contact between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and early traders, explorers and settlers?

Historical skills

Use historical terms (ACHHS082) **AC**

Pose a range of questions about the past (ACHHS083) **AC**

Identify sources (ACHHS216) **AC**

Locate relevant information from sources provided (ACHHS084) **AC**

Identify different points of view (ACHHS085) **AC**

Use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written, role play) and digital technologies (ACHHS087) **AC**

Historical concepts

- Source
- Cause and effect
- Perspectives
- Empathy
- Significance



Background information

- There are documented and well-known contacts between the Aboriginal people of Australia and others. There are also rumoured or assumed contacts, such as between shipwreck survivors and Aboriginal people, particularly in the mid-west region of Western Australia.



Teaching notes

- Review the text for unfamiliar vocabulary; for example, 'Yolngu' and 'Macassan' and discuss with the students.
- On page 64, explore the attitudes and values with the students that led to either positive and peaceful contact or conflict. Discuss what attitudes and values the British had when they arrived with the First Fleet in 1788.



Additional activities

- Examine artworks from the northern Australian Aboriginal people which show evidence of contact with the Macassans; for example, ships shown in rock art.
- Ask students to write an extended narrative detailing what they think may have happened to certain Dutch survivors who reached the West Australian shore.



Resources

- <<http://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/discovery-centre-news/2011-archive/trepang/>> Some information about the Macassans as well as an example of art and some pictures of trepang.

Contact before 1788 - 1

Before British settlement of Australia in 1788 there were numerous contacts between Australian Aboriginal people and people from Asia and Europe. Read about some of these early contacts.

The Macassans

It is estimated that Macassan fishermen visited the north coast of Australia from at least the early 1600s. The fisherman from the island Sulawesi in Indonesia came to dive for trepang—sea cucumbers—which were valuable in Asia.

Aboriginal people and the Macassans had trade agreements and would exchange goods and work together.

The Macassans would travel across the water in fleets with their boats called praus. They would set up camps on the coast and collect the trepang from the waters. After collection, the trepang were boiled, skinned and smoked to take back to sell and trade across Asia.

The Yolngu people received cloth, tobacco, rice and knives from the visitors. Some Yolngu even worked with the Macassans, collecting and processing the trepang.

The Australian government banned the Macassans from trepang fishing in Australian waters in 1906, but their influence on the Yolngu people is still seen in the art, language and stories of the region.

Cape Kerweer

The first recorded contact between Europeans and Aboriginal people took place in the Cape York region at Cape Kerweer.

In 1606, Willem Jansz sent men ashore in search of trade opportunities with the people. In the oral histories of the Wik people from the region, it is reported that the Dutch sailors took some of the local women and a fight broke out. Nine of the sailors and some Wik people were killed, and the Wik people set fire to the Dutch boats.



After this, Jansz decided to turn back and return to Indonesia. He named the site Cape Kerweer, which means Cape Turnabout in the Dutch language.

The west coast

From the 1600s to the 1800s there were many European ships wrecked along the coast of Western Australia. Although there is no certainty about what happened to all of the wrecks, there are several reports of survivors making it to shore alive. Just one example is the *Vergulde Draeck* which was wrecked near Ledge Point in 1656. Seven survivors returned to Batavia in a small boat. Search parties went back for the 68 other survivors, but no trace of them was found. Possibly the European people perished in the difficult environment they found themselves in, or perhaps they were taken in and looked after by local Aboriginal people.

Contact before 1788 - 2

1. Why do you think:

(a) relations were good between the Macassans and the Aboriginal people?

(b) relations were bad between the Dutch and the Aboriginal people at Cape Kerweer?

2. Draw two pictures about the contact between the Wik people of Cape York and the Dutch sailors who landed there in 1606. Write a short description from the:

(a) Wik people's point of view.



(b) Dutch sailors' point of view.



3. Read the words below. Use green to circle the behaviours and values that promote good relations between people. Use red to circle those that lead to difficulties and problems.

violence

understanding

respect

yelling

aggression

calm

compromise

cooperation

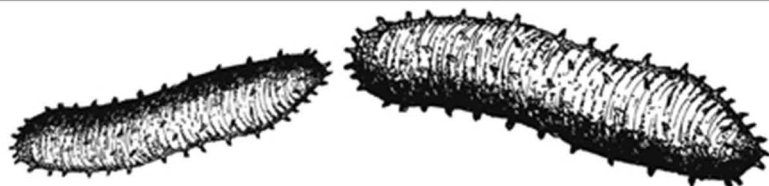
orders

disrespect

demands

stealing

sharing



Trepang are still highly desirable in Asian cuisine. In addition to being eaten, they are used for medicinal purposes in traditional Chinese medicines.

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Contact before 1788 - 3

Choose one: contact with the Macassans; contact with the Dutch at Cape Kerweer; or the *Vergulde Draeck* shipwreck - highlight your choice.

1. Use the text on page 63 and one other source to answer the questions below.

(a) Who visited Australia and had contact with the local Aboriginal people?

(b) When did they come?

(c) Why did they come?

(d) Where did they land or visit?

(e) What happened when they arrived? (What do you **think** happened in the case of shipwreck?)

2. Write two of your own questions and find out the answers.

(a)

(b)

3. Create a PowerPoint™ presentation to display your information.





Early settlers and explorers in WA reported seeing some fairer-skinned and lighter-haired Aboriginal people in the mid-west region of Western Australia. Explorer George Grey was one of these people.