

Macassar Story

Wurramarrba, Charlie Galiyawa “Macassar Story” collected by Stokes, J; in Hercus, L & Sutton, P (eds) This is What Happened Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986. Courtesy Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Macassar Story - Anindilyakwa Story

Author: Charlie Galiyawa Wurramarrba, born c. 1893, died 1978. Language: Anindilyakwa
Collected and transcribed by Judith Stokes
Recorded at Angurugu, G roote Eylandt, c. 1969

Introduction

The Macassan traders came annually from the port of Macassar in Sulawesi (Celebes) to Groote Eylandt. They camped at various places along the whole of the coast of north Australia, collecting trepang and pearl shell, which they took back with them to trade with the Chinese. During these seasonal visits they employed Aborigines to help them. It is not certain when their activities in Australia began but they ended when the White Australia Policy was introduced in 1906. There is no one alive today who actually went away with the Macassans.

Translation

1 This story is about the Macassans long ago.
2-3 I know we lived together, the old men, all my fathers, uncles and others and the Macassans. We lived at Amakalyuwakba.
4-7 They collected trepang. We ate 'birrida', rice, 'dirdirra', sugar, 'kalukwa', coconut, we ate rice. We ate

rice which they called 'birrida', and what do you call it, cocoa.

8 They collected trepang.
9 A lot of us Aborigines lived together, women and children
10 Time went by, they went on collecting trepang, and then Mamariga blew this way and over to its country, to the Macassans' country.
11 The Macassans went away and stayed over there and then Barra began to blow across this way.
12 The boats arrived once more in our country, over at Amakalyuwakba.
13 We camped at Bajuwini, the Macassans' camp, at Kwurrilili, over here at Lembakwurridi, over there at Arrikburnamanja, at Akwamburrkba, at the Macassan camp at Amakarjirrakba and at Yarranya.
14 That was all.
15-16 We used to get tomahawks, knives and material. That's all.
17-18 They drank a lot of beer. The old men gave it to us.
19-20 No, no, we didn't want it. We were frightened, we were terrified, we were afraid of the fighting, the spears, the knives and tomahawks.
21 The women all ran off to the bush, they fled.
22 They don't do this now, they stay

	close, very close.	40	Jembirra, Wabadarriju and Baju, Baju Nenungumurrkulya had all died when my father went away with the Macassans, these three died and my father was the last one left alive.
23	But we used to be scared in those days and we fled to the hills and into the bush.		
24-25	Then they were gone, there were none left, no more Macassans. Now just Aboriginals lived together, we Aboriginals.	41	He was away for years, my father was away four years, he told me.
		42	I wasn't only little, I was already grown up when my father told me this story.
26	Time went by and still there were only us Aboriginals, until these days.	43-44	Then while he was away he grew up, he grew tall. All his mothers and fathers mourned for him.
27	Then White people came, then White people arrived, missionaries arrived, recently.	45	His fathers were gone, they died, they killed each other while he was away and he knew nothing about it.
28	Now there was tobacco and food again, we had food to eat once more.	46	One was still living, Numarrikudikaya, and the other two fathers, Nilyandiwurrina and Nenumalbinaja.
29-30	And that's all. We're still here.	47	Nilyangkiyeyiba, Nenungwanjirrburna, they were already gone without him knowing, but there were still three alive when he got back.
31	They died, we were all gone, we knew the Macassans, they died and were gone, all except me and the old men, we three remained.	48	His mother had finished bearing children, there were no more, there were only a few, my father and my aunt, his sister, and that was all.
32	Now some more of the old men have gone.	49-50	He told me the story, not just when I was a little boy, but when I was already grown up.
33-34	We knew the Macassans, we ate their food, we smoked their tobacco. These people today are ignorant, they're stupid.	51-52	I worked on a Macassan boat. I ate there on the boat.
35	That's all.	53	It brought me this way to Arrikburnumanja and over there to Amakalyuwakba, it brought me back again, I came back, it brought me back this way again.
36	Long ago my father told me his story.	54	I knew their food.
37	He went away when he was young, while he was still single, before he grew up.	55-56	I knew a few Macassan words I used to
38-39	That man took him, Wanabadi took him, Wanabadi the Macassan, Wanabadi the Macassan took him, he took him away. He went to their country.		

- hear. I used to hear these words, 'Yeshubebi', they said, 'Yeshamba', they said.
- 57 These are Macassarese words.
- 58-59 I remember these words from hearing the Macassans speak when they were talking with my father. I knew.
- 60-61 I was big enough, I was a young single boy like Stephen here. My father was Nenikubandaya's age.
- 62 When we were grown up the boat arrived and their visits came to an end.
- 63 I knew the White men, Daymadalu, my father's master, Daymadalu, Wanabadi, Babalindi.
- 64-65 I knew the Macassans who came here, these men came. We had plenty of food to eat.
- 66 That's quite true.
- 67-68 And there used to be a different kind of tomahawk. It wasn't like this 'bangkilya', this 'lanymanga' wasn't like a 'bangkilya', it was quite different.
- 69 We would chop down wild honey, we would chop with it, it would split and they would throw it away.
- 70-71 So it went on. My father was always telling me about it.
- 72-73 He'd stay for a while and then he'd go off after pearl shell. They were always doing that.
- 74-75 My father went on one of the big boats. The wind tossed them around.
- 76-77 The boat was wrecked, my father told me. He lived on one.
- 78 There was one White man whose son knew the Macassan language, but he himself spoke English.
- 79 That's all my father told me.
- 80 My father stayed away a long time.
- 81-82 My grandmother and grandfather and everyone didn't know what to do about my father. 'He's dead now', they said.
- 83 He appeared right over there at Mungwarndumanja in Jarrakba country.
- 84 They kept on working, and then they took him on board, and that was the end, they brought him around here.
- 85 That's all.