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Contents

Introduction	4
Early Contact	6
Early Explorers	8
European Contact	10
Captain Cook	12
Through European Eyes	14
The First Fleet	16
The Cadigal People	18
First Fleet Records	20
Kidnap	22
Changing Relationships	24
Torres Strait Islander Peoples	26
Timeline	28
Glossary	30
Index	32
Find Out More	32

Words that are printed in bold are explained in the Glossary on page 30.

Introduction

This series of books is about the first peoples who lived in Australia. It explores their arrival and their contact with Europeans.

First Peoples

Australia is an **ancient continent**. It has been inhabited continuously for many thousands of years. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lived in Australia long before the arrival of Europeans.

Aboriginal peoples live across the whole continent of Australia. Traditionally, Torres Strait Islander peoples lived on the islands in the Torres Strait, which is between the Cape York Peninsula on mainland Australia and New Guinea.

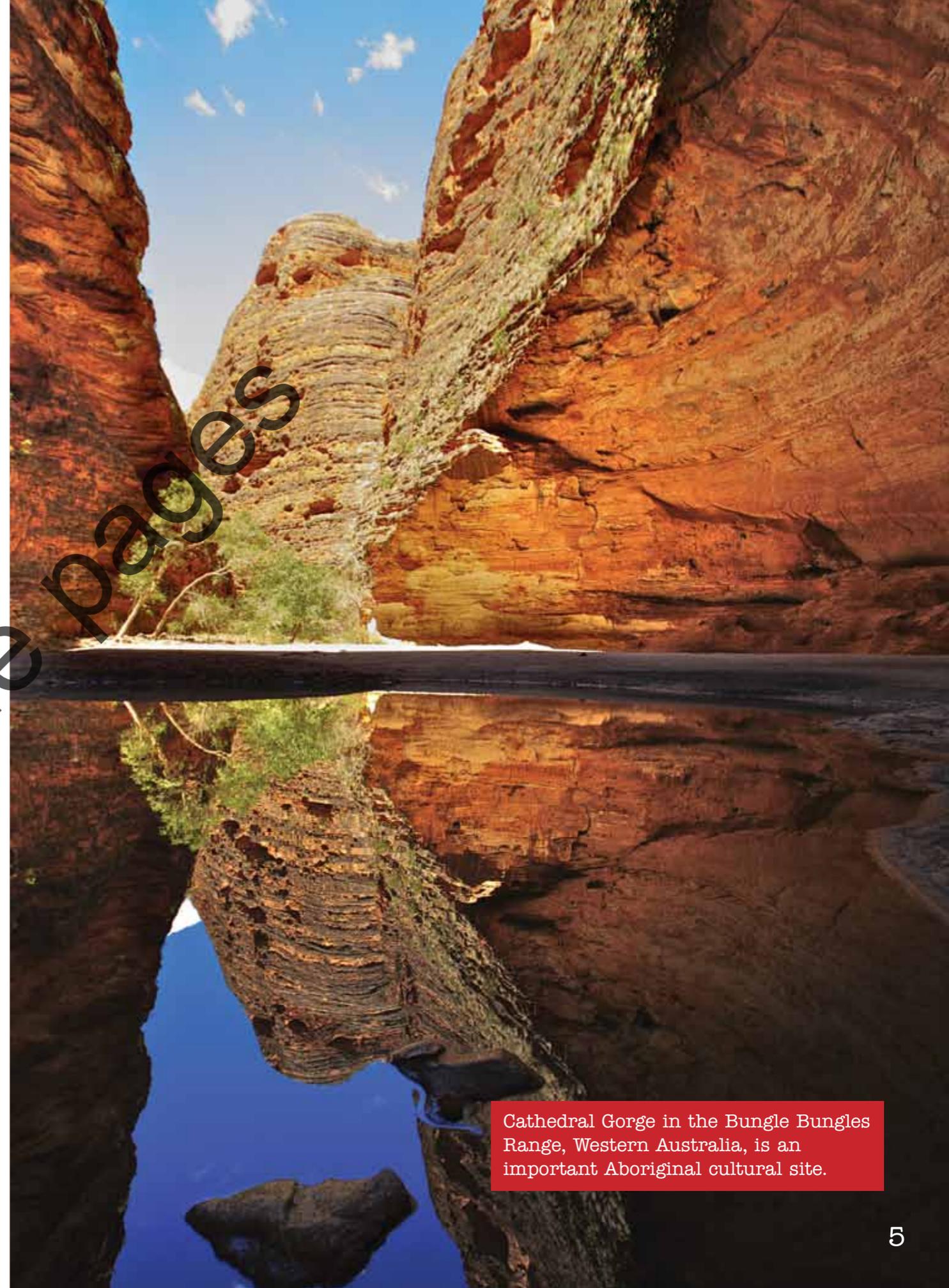
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not one group of people. There are many different groups or nations. Each group has its own culture, customs and language. It has been estimated that over 250 different languages were spoken by Aboriginal groups across Australia before European arrival.

About this Book

This book is about the first contact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had with people from other countries.

The book explores the **devastating** impact of the arrival of Europeans on Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales, from the time the First Fleet arrived in 1788. Governor Arthur Phillip's instructions from the British government were to befriend the Aboriginal peoples, but relationships between the two groups quickly **deteriorated** when the new settlers wanted more land and more resources.

The book also looks at some well-known Aboriginal people such as Bennelong and Pemulwuy and why they became famous.



Cathedral Gorge in the Bungle Bungles Range, Western Australia, is an important Aboriginal cultural site.

Early Contact

For hundreds of years before Europeans discovered Australia, Aboriginal peoples living in northern Australia, as well as Torres Strait Islanders, were trading with the **Macassans** and people of southern Java.

Trading Partners

The Macassans are thought to be the first people to have had contact with Aboriginal peoples.

The fishermen traders of Makassar in Indonesia left their homeland with the north-west **monsoon** in December each year. They camped in sheltered bays along the Northern Territory coast and the Kimberley coast of Western Australia.

The Macassans collected animals such as sea slugs and sea cucumbers, also called trepang, as well as turtle shells, pearls and timber. The Macassans traded goods such as cloth, tobacco, rice and knives with the local Aboriginal peoples. Some Aboriginal women married the traders and returned with them to Makassar.

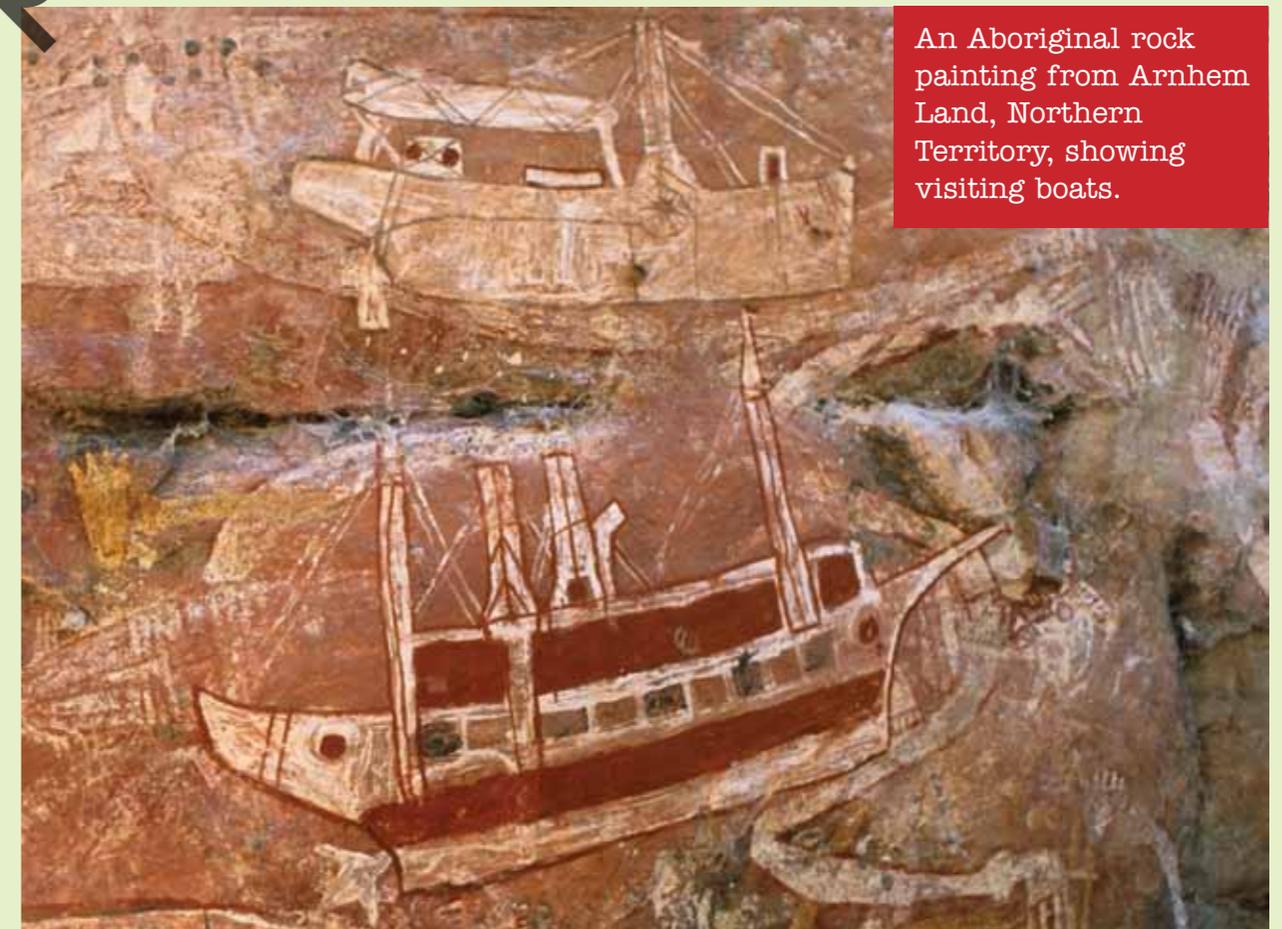
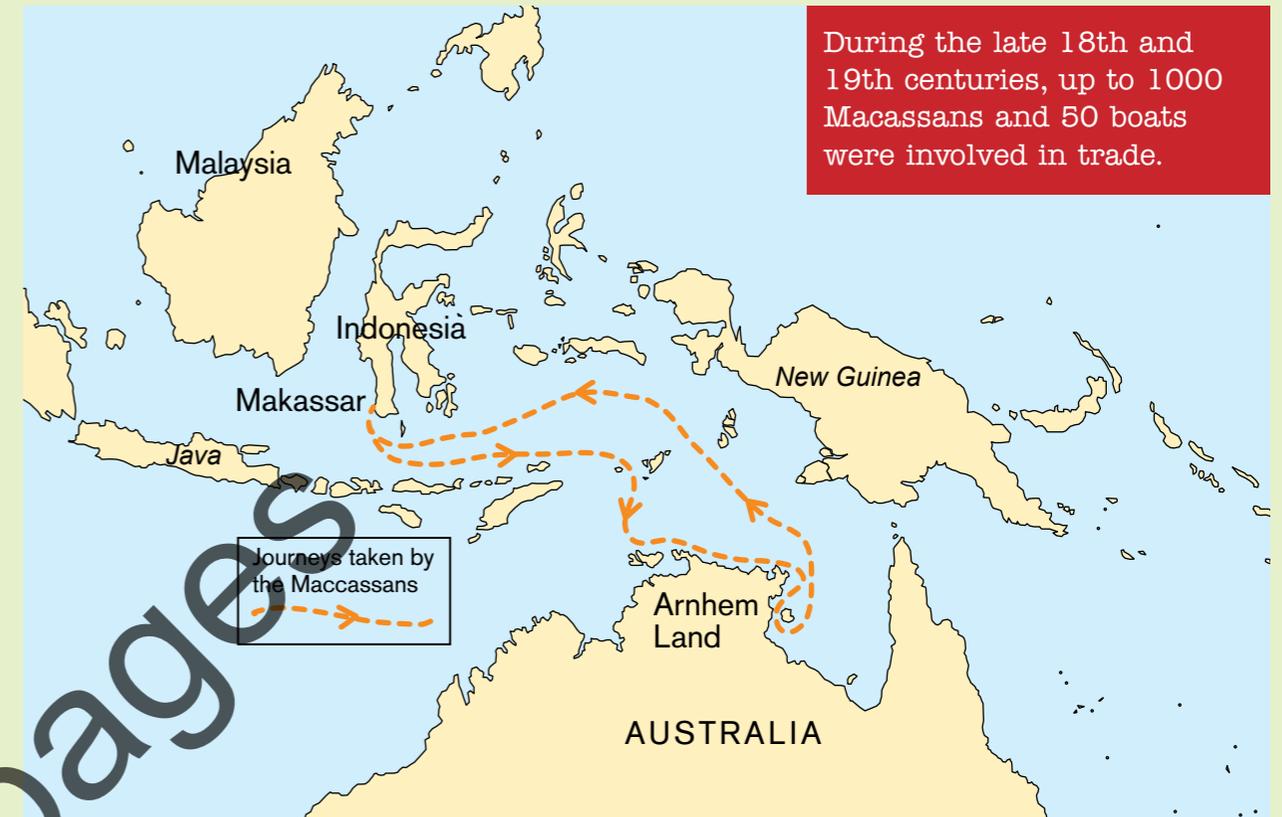
Sea Slugs and Cucumbers

Aboriginal peoples allowed the fishermen to set up camp to clean and cook their sea slugs and cucumbers. The Macassans used the monsoon winds to return to their country in March or April of the following year.

Relationships between the Aboriginal peoples and the Macassans were most likely based on friendship and respect as the Macassans lived with them for up to four months each year.

Trade Connections

The Yolngu people from central and north-eastern Arnhem Land still show a connection to the Macassans in their art and ceremonies. Also, the Yolngu language uses some Indonesian words, such as *rupiah*, which means "money".



Early Explorers

Ancestors of today's Aboriginal peoples were isolated on the **continent** of Australia. However, people from other areas in Asia began following the **Macassans** in exploring the oceans around their countries. They, too, may have met Aboriginal people, but the Dutch were the first to record their contact.

Willem Janszoon

The Dutch were keen explorers and wanted to find any unknown lands in the southern hemisphere. In 1606, Captain Willem Janszoon was instructed by the Dutch government to search the south seas for such land. Captain Janszoon, on board a small ship called the *Duyfken*, found New Guinea.

Making Contact

Janszoon then sailed along the western coast of Cape York Peninsula on the northern tip of Australia. Janszoon thought Australia was part of New Guinea because he never saw the Torres Strait that separates the countries.

The Dutch are thought to be the first Europeans to have come into contact with Australia's Aboriginal peoples. The Aboriginal people were alarmed at the ship's arrival. This may have been the first time they had seen Europeans or a large ship.



The discovery of Australia, as recorded by the *Duyfken*, incorrectly showing Australia as part of New Guinea.



A copy of the Dutch merchant ship the *Duyfken*.

Charting the Coast

The Dutch charted over 300 kilometres of Australia's coastline. This was the first time Australia had been mapped through actual **observation**, and not guesswork.



European Contact

In 1688, William Dampier was the first Englishman to anchor in New Holland, which was the name Abel Tasman had given Australia in 1644. Dampier returned again in 1699. The notes he took were later published.

Dampier's Journal

On his first voyage, Dampier wrote:

We sent our boat ashore to speak with the natives but they would not abide our coming so we spent three days in seeking their houses ...

In 1699, Dampier anchored in Shark Bay in Western Australia. He was not impressed with what he saw, describing the landscape as **barren** and sandy, without good sources of fresh water or animals.

Dampier recorded that the Aboriginal peoples slept in the open without any covering and had no houses, clothing, sheep, poultry or fruit, which he thought was strange.

Strange Experiences

Contact with European people would have been a strange experience for the Aboriginal people as well.

Seventeenth-century European clothing was **elaborate** and **formal**. Aboriginal people's clothing was very different.

In some areas, Aboriginal people wore cloaks made of fibre. Others wore string belts with a fringe or pouch attached. These belts were used to carry tools and weapons. In southern areas, people wore kangaroo or possum-skin cloaks in cold weather.



An Aboriginal woman and child wearing a possum-skin cloak

Elizabeth Durack's painting shows Dampier after arriving in Australia in 1699. Dampier and his crew planned to bribe an Aboriginal person to help them carry supplies of water to his ship. Dampier clothed the men, who refused to help. They returned the clothes and Dampier's men carried their own water.

