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‘Small, individually nondescript and easily overlooked’¹: Contact beads from northwest Arnhem Land in an Indigenous-Macassan-European hybrid economy

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Abstract

This paper examines the interactions between Indigenous traditional owners, Macassan trepangers and European settlers in northwest Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. The recovery of an assemblage of beads from six archaeological sites within the Manganawal estate (Djulirri, Malarrak 1, Malarrak 4, Bald Rock 1, Bald Rock 2 and Bald Rock 3) in the Wellington Range, supports the case for the introduction of these items to Arnhem Land in the pre-Mission era context. We present descriptions of one stone and 28 glass beads/bead fragments and examine the significance of the exchange of these items and how they became incorporated into existing Indigenous cultural systems. This archaeological evidence is assessed in concert with the historical, ethnographic, linguistic and anthropological records. We interpret this within the framework of a hybrid economy between Indigenous people, Europeans and Macassans (Altman 2001, 2006, 2007).

¹ Title courtesy of Peter Francis Jr (1990:19).

Introduction

There is a convenient colonial discourse in archaeology that implies that Indigenous people were passive participants who lacked the ability to negotiate and enforce rules about the nature of their engagements with others. This has sometimes been the case with studies into Macassan trepang fishing in northern Australian waters (Bednarik 2013:42–44). However, many historical examples exist to demonstrate that interaction was conducted on Indigenous people’s own terms and within their own normative traditions (cf. Keen 2010) and research demonstrates that they were far from passive economic participants, developing complex methods of interaction that allowed the maintenance of customary systems. In recent decades Australian archaeology has refocused the assessment of culture contact to avoid ethnocentricity, unidirectional models and colonial bias (cf. McNiven and Russell 2002; Paterson 2010, 2011; Stillman 2001). Currently, the contact period in the NT is considered to occur after AD 1720, with more recent studies suggesting a longer timeframe extending into the 17th century (Clarke 1994; Macknight 1969; Mitchell 1994; Taçon et al. 2010; Theden-Ringl et al. 2011). Previous explorations into the extent and nature of this contact have included studies of economic resources (Clarke 1994; Mitchell 1994), skeletal material (Macknight and Thorne 1968; Theden-Ringl et al. 2011), ceramics (Grave and McNiven 2013) and rock art (May et al. 2010; Taçon et al. 2010; Wesley et al. 2012). Watson-Andaya (2006:675) noted that an effective means of tracking cultural interactions in history is through a consideration of trade and material culture, though Macknight (2013:27) expressed scepticism that archaeology can answer questions concerning the interaction between Macassan trepangers and Aboriginal people. To investigate this issue, research was carried out by one of the authors (DW) at Anuru Bay (a major trepang processing site) and nearby rockshelter sites in the Wellington Range (Figure 1). Contra to Macknight’s (2013:26–28) position, the recovery of ‘contact beads’ (defined here as those introduced to Indigenous people by settlers or traders) from the Wellington Range sites provides supporting evidence of Macassan-Indigenous-European interactions. Beads are suggested to have comprised just one material culture item in a wider inventory of Macassan-Indigenous-European exchanges (Barrkmann 2010; Blair and Hall 2013:210; Clark and May 2013; Macknight 1976; Mitchell 1994:98–100; Paterson 2010:168; Powell 1982:35–36); however, to date they have received little attention. In fact, Russell stated that ‘In the absence of unambiguous trade goods (such as glass beads) we are greatly hampered in studying the impact of contact on Australian Aboriginal culture’ (2005:45). Therefore, this study presents a preliminary analysis of the Wellington Range beads, drawing on Altman’s (2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009) Indigenous hybrid economy model to explore their implications for our understandings of culture-contact in northern Australia.
Various models for examining activity in archaeological contexts have been drawn from anthropological models (see Butzer 1982; Jochim 1976, 1979; Steward 1938, 2006; Thomas 1973, 1989). Altman’s (2006:36) explicit stated that the linkages and interdependencies that arise between groups are complicated and influenced by market, political and social forces. Therefore, the social, behavioural and economic outcomes for Arnhem Land communities during the contact period should result in archaeologically visible economic and behavioural changes. Indeed, this has previously been demonstrated to be the case on the Cobourg Peninsula (Mitchell 1994, 1996) and Groote Eylandt (Clarke 1994) (see also Berndt and Berndt 1954; McIntosh 1996a, 1996b, 2006, 2008; Thomson 1949; Warner 1932, 1937), although the issue of sustained Macassan contact with the same people on an annual basis has not been effectively demonstrated, researched or explained (Peterson 2003). The Wellington Range is a significant research area in which to explore these questions, owing to close proximity to the known trepang processing site at Anuru Bay. Additionally, the Manganowal traditional owners to close proximity to the known trepang processing site at Anuru Bay. Additionally, the Manganowal traditional owners (Macknight 2013). Alongside the extraction of trepang, other opportunistic exchanges involved the transfer of Indonesian products, such as cloth, tamarind fruit, dugout canoes, iron, glass, beads, ceramics, rice and drugs (including alcohol, betel nut, opium and tobacco) and Australian products, including ironwood, cypress pine, sandalwood, pearls, pearl shell, buffalo horns and hawksbill turtle shell (Barkmann 2010; Blair and Hall 2013:210; Clark and May 2013; Dreyfuss and Dzuhumuruk 1980:14–15; MacKnight 1976; Mitchell 1994:98–100; Paterson 2010:168; Powell 1982:35–36).

The nature of the trepang industry in Sulawesi and the exploitation of northern Australian (Marege) stocks of the resource have been discussed elsewhere in detail, and Figure 2 illustrates the region associated with this activity (Berndt and Berndt 1954; Bowdler 2002; Bulbeck and Rowley 2001; Clarke 1994, 2000; Ganter 2003, 2006; Macknight 1969, 1972, 1973, 1976, 1986, 2008; Máñez and Ferse 2010; Mitchell 1994, 1996; Rowley 1997; Russell 2004; Sutherland 2000; Trudgen 2000; Warner 1932, 1937). However, the timing of the first Macassan visits to Australia remains debated (see Macknight 1976, 2013; May et al. 2010; Taçon et al. 2010; Theden-Ringl et al. 2011), although it is clear that these visits occurred more frequently from the late 1700s onwards to satisfy the increasing demands from Chinese markets (Macknight 2013). Alongside the extraction of trepang, other opportunistic exchanges involved the transfer of Indonesian products, such as cloth, tamarind fruit, dugout canoes, iron, glass, beads, ceramics, rice and drugs (including alcohol, betel nut, opium and tobacco) and Australian products, including ironwood, cypress pine, sandalwood, pearls, pearl shell, buffalo horns and hawksbill turtle shell (Barkmann 2010; Blair and Hall 2013:210; Clark and May 2013; Dreyfuss and Dzuhumuruk 1980:14–15; MacKnight 1976; Mitchell 1994:98–100; Paterson 2010:168; Powell 1982:35–36).

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Figure 2 Island South East Asia and Australia (after Blair and Hall 2013:212; Morwood and Hobbs 1997:198, Russell 2004:8, Sutherland 2000).

Exchanging glass beads in local material culture framework. One prominent example included James Cook, who left a detailed account of his travels. Other explorers, such as Samuel Wallis, also documented the use of beads in the Macassan trade. The Macassans were known for their trading voyages to the Pacific, where they would exchange glass beads and other goods for marine resources.

The ethnographic record also reveals information concerning more recent usage of organic beads. Based on examination of objects from museum collections, McAdam (2009:227, 353) reported that organic beads were made from shell, bone, grass, reeds and teeth in the 19th and 20th centuries. She (2009:382) also concluded that beaded items were multifunctional, dependent on kinship, gender and age, and were part of a complex customary value and status system. Contemporary Indigenous production of beads continues to utilise the same resources as documented by McAdam (Simak 2007). Simak (2007:5) provided a long list of contemporary materials, including a high diversity of different species of shells, grasses, reeds, plant seeds, nuts, dried fruit and vertebrae. Simak (2007) revealed that necklaces made from these beads were afforded a very high level of traditional significance across many Indigenous groups. Thus, beaded items have had profound traditional significance in Aboriginal culture from the Pleistocene to the present.

Early European interactions were noted to involve the exchange of beaded items, which likely became incorporated into the aforementioned material culture framework. One such prominent example included James Cook, who left
beads, ribbons and cloth in exchange for taking 40–50 spears from an abandoned hut (Pearson 2005:61). Birmingham (1976:314–315) reported finding a number of glass beads at Wybalenna mission, as did Brockwell et al. (1989) at the Ooldea Soak and mission site (South Australia). A cache of blue glass beads was reported to be eroding from the chest area of a burial from Snaggy Bend on the central Murray River (Clark and Hope 1985:71). Megaw (1993:9) reported the find of a single blue glass bead from the uppermost levels of the main Curarrurang rockshelter in New South Wales (NSW) and speculated that this may have been given to local Aboriginal people by the explorers Bass and Flinders in 1796 (Anon 1963:6). Otherwise, according to Hardy (1998:40–41), there were no continuous ‘cultural markers’, or traceable artefact types, such as beads, for the majority of Aboriginal people in the Sydney region. Birmingham (1976:314–315) thus far is the only source that has linked introduced glass beads to a pre-existing customary context, relating their use to the traditional threading of shell beads. With the exception of the larger finds at Wybalenna, Snaggy Bend and Ooldea Soak, there has been little reporting of glass beads from post-contact Indigenous archaeological contexts, which could in part be due to their being recorded broadly as ‘small finds’, or their not being captured in sieve residues as a consequence of their size.

**Contact Beads in the NT and Arnhem Land: History, Ethnography and Archaeology**

The earliest historical reference to contact beads in the NT that we have been able to locate dates from 1705, when the Dutch vessels *Vossemboch*, *Nova Hollandia* and *Wajer* explored the Tiwi Islands, reporting that the locals ‘appeared to be very greedy after linen, knives, beads and such knick-knacks’ (Forrest 1995:16). However, the majority of evidence for beads in western Arnhem Land derives from late 19th and early 20th century ethnographic and archaeological sources. The majority of Aboriginal people in the Sydney region. Birmingham (1976:314–315) thus far is the only source that has linked introduced glass beads to a pre-existing customary context, relating their use to the traditional threading of shell beads. With the exception of the larger finds at Wybalenna, Snaggy Bend and Ooldea Soak, there has been little reporting of glass beads from post-contact Indigenous archaeological contexts, which could in part be due to their being recorded broadly as ‘small finds’, or their not being captured in sieve residues as a consequence of their size.

Allen (1969, 2008) suggested, from his archaeological investigations at Port Essington, that the typical contact items in Arnhem Land Indigenous sites should include metal, tobacco and matchbox tins, metal fragments, lead shot, bullets and casings, clay pipes, buttons, glass and some ceramics. But, despite numerous excavations, there has been little reporting or discussion of contact period artefact assemblages from stratified deposits (Table 1 and Figure 4).

Schrire (1982) excavated five sites in the western Arnhem Land plateau region and recovered glass, iron fragments, beads, cloth and some miscellaneous contact items from three, with beads only found in the sites in the southern gorges rather than in sites more exposed to European contact (i.e. Oenpelli mission and near buffalo shooting areas of the northern floodplains). She recovered three glass beads from the top 5 cm of Jimeri I (from a 13 m² excavated area) and 30 glass beads from the top 10 cm of Jimeri II (from a 22 m² excavated area) (Schrire 1982:152, 196–197); however, analysing contact artefact assemblages was outside the scope of her interpretations. Mitchell (1994:176, 213) reported a variety of contact items from middens on the Coburg Peninsula and surrounding islands, and noted ‘clay’ beads amongst the artefacts recorded at the Irugu Point shell midden. On Groote Eylandt and Buckerton Island, Clarke (1994:134) found low densities of earthenware pottery sherds, blue pattern glazed ware, white ceramics, glass fragments, iron fragments, two pieces of bronze and three glass beads. On Groote Eylandt, single beads were recovered from both Maburrawjan (an open shell midden) and Mairngkala Cave (rockshelter) (Clarke 1994:134, 296). A single bead was also recovered from Aburrkujmanja (a midden complex) on Buckerton Island (Clarke 2000:156). All three were of red glass, and were oblong in shape, reflecting a low diversity and abundance of beads represented in this period.
area. Clarke (2000:156–157) interpreted all three sites as being occupied in the Macassan period (>1700 to 1907 AD), with use of Marngkala Cave and Aburrkbumanja continuing into the mission period (post-1920 AD). Macknight (1969:315) recovered three green, one yellow and one blue glass bead from the Anuru Bay site and another white bead from a trepang processing site on Hardy Island, though he did not speculate on any of the beads’ ages or functions.

While excavations at the Anbangbang rockshelter produced some glass and metal fragments from the surface levels, no beads were reported to have been recovered from this site, nor from Djuwarr 1, Nauwalabila 1 or open sites along the South Alligator River (Jones 1985). Allen and Barton (1989) reported no beads or recent contact artefacts from excavations at Narradig Warde Djokkeng. Other post-contact sites investigated by Mitchell (1994) in association with the establishment of Fort Wellington and Victoria settlement at Port Essington, ca 1820–1840, included the Minto Head shell midden. Both Allen (1969) and Mitchell (1994) assessed this site as being occupied in two phases: initially at the time of Port Essington (1840s) and then later in the 1890s. None of the artefacts recovered included beads (Mitchell 1994:204). Collectively, this evidence suggests, albeit via an absence of evidence, that beads were not part of the European and Indigenous trade economy in the early 19th century.

**Beads from the Wellington Range:**

**Methodology, Results and Interpretation**

Archaeology of the Wellington Range Bead Assemblage

The study area is located in northwestern coastal Arnhem Land, where an outlier of the Mamadawerre Formation forms the Wellington Ranges, incorporating the offshore Goulburn Islands, with King River constituting the area’s major drainage system to the east (Figure 1). Owing to its proximity to the major trepang processing site at Anuru Bay (see Macknight 1969, 1976) and the abundant rockshelter sites found in the nearby sandstone range (Chaloupka 1993),

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**Figure 4** Historical places referred to in the text, and archaeological sites with glass beads (after Clarke 1994; Macknight 1969; Mitchell 1994; Schrire 1984).

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**Table 1** Bead data from archaeological sites in Arnhem Land.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Number of Beads</th>
<th>Depth Below Surface (cm)</th>
<th>Laboratory Code</th>
<th>Uncalibrated Date BP</th>
<th>Sample Depth Below Surface (cm)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jimeri I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0–5</td>
<td>GAK-630</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>0–5</td>
<td>Schrire (1982:152)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimeri II</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0–10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Schrire (1982:196)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irgul Point Site</td>
<td>Unknown number of clay beads</td>
<td>Surface</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Mitchell (1994:213)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irgul Point Site 25</td>
<td>1 x red glass</td>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>ANU-8321</td>
<td>710±60 Atactodea striata</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Clarke (1994:174–175)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marngkala Cave</td>
<td>1 x red glass</td>
<td>0–12</td>
<td>ANU-8316</td>
<td>350±60 charcoal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Clarke (1994:293–295)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aburrkbumanja</td>
<td>1 x red glass</td>
<td>4–8</td>
<td>ANU-8328</td>
<td>420±60 Tapes hiantina</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Clarke (1994:404–405)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
current research has focused on the central Wellington Range within the Manganowal traditional owners’ estate. Malarrak 1, Malarrak 4, Djulirri (also known as Djurrirri), Bald Rock 1, Bald Rock 2 and Bald Rock 3 (also known as Maliwawa) are located at varying distances (12–20 km) from the major Anuru Bay site and are approximately 140 km from the Port Essington outpost. Malarrak 1, Malarrak 4 and Djulirri are sandstone overhangs on upper rocky scree slopes with substantial cultural deposits; they also contain a large corpus of rock art with Macassan imagery. Bald Rock 1, Bald Rock 2 and Bald Rock 3 are shelters at the base of outliter sandstone outcrops on the sandy plains, with deep cultural sediments. The Malarrak sites are the northernmost rockshelters along the Wellington Range, Djulirri is located in its central western portion and the Bald Rock sites are found on its southern margin.

Excavation utilised standard techniques and was undertaken to establish a general occupation sequence for the region, with specific reference to establishing the post-contact material culture sequence. Excavation was conducted in 1 m² units using 2 cm spit depths. Documentation of each excavated square involved sediment descriptions, Munsell chart colour identification of sediments, pH testing, end unit sketches and photographs, followed by stratigraphic drawing of sections. During the excavation any exposed in situ artefacts and charcoal samples for radiometric dating were individually recorded with X, Y, Z measurements (cm) and bagged separately. Sediments were screened through nested 6 and 3 mm sieves for laboratory sorting.

A total of 30 beads/bead fragments were recovered from the surface and excavated contexts. Of these, 12 were from a 6 m² surface collection at Djulirri, four were from a 10 m² surface collection at Malarrak 4, and the remaining 14 were recovered from 1 m² test excavations at Malarrak 4 and Bald Rock 1, 2 and 3 (Table 2). Another bead was also recovered in Stratigraphic Unit 1 (SU 1) from Malarrak 1 (Sq25 XU6); however, it was misplaced during transportation and thus is not included in this analysis beyond Table 3, where it has been included to assist in establishing the assemblage chronology. Excavated beads were found either on the surface or in the uppermost 15 cm (i.e. SU 1) of every site, and were all associated with other contact materials. No beads were found in deeper units lacking other contact artefacts. In all sites, SU 1 was uniformly dark greasy brown, organic and charcoal rich, and comprised very fine-grained, well sorted silt and sand grains. Figure 5 is the south wall section drawing of SqG25 from Malarrak 1, which illustrates the context of SU 1 that was replicated in every excavated deposit.

Charcoal samples from SU 1 were submitted for dating from Malarrak 1, Malarrak 4 and Bald Rock 1 (Table 3). Beads were recovered from excavation units above, within and below some of the dated units (Table 3). Dates were calibrated using OxCal 4.2.2. As shown, an outlier date from the Malarrak 1 Sq25 XU6/3 sample (NZA32470) returned a calibrated date of 1436–1490 cal AD, whereas generally the other dates were within the 18th and 19th centuries, with the most recent age determination being 1921 AD (Table 3). Figure 6 shows the calibrated distributions, illustrating the difficulties that occur in dating post-1700 AD samples. A range of taphonomic and post-depositional factors, such as animal and insect (termite) burrowing, vertical and horizontal impacts from climate, and anthropogenic influences are reported to have an impact on NT archaeological sites (cf. Bourke 2000; Brockwell 2009; Gregory 1998; Guse 2006; Mowat 1994, 1995). Any of these mechanisms may account for the transport of small particles of sediment and charcoal, and even possibly artefacts, up or down through deposits. Therefore, larger pieces of in situ charcoal were selected for submission for AMS dating. Despite this precaution, there

Figure 5 South wall section drawing of Square G25 at Malarrak 1.
Wellington Range archaeological sites.

Table 2
Summary of stratigraphic information for beads from the Radiocarbon results from Malarrak 1, Malarrak 4 and Bald Rock 1. All samples were charcoal (OxCal 4.2.2).

Table 3
A date of 1436–1490 AD was taken from the northwest corner movement of this artefact. Likewise, the sample that returned the earliest radiocarbon date from Malarrak 1 proved to have the most severe post-depositional issues regarding site integrity. It became apparent by XU12 that there were at least five post-hole features in the northwest quadrant of SgQ25. These were indistinguishable in the very dark grey to dark grey charcoal rich sediments of SUs 1 and 2 until the excavation reached the light brownish yellow sediments of SU 4 (Figure 5). There is strong ethnographic evidence that the post-holes were the result of the construction of burial platforms during the final phase of site use in the post-contact period, as recorded by Poignant (National Library of Australia 5396-298, 5396-299 and 5396-300) in 1952. This particular post-depositional disturbance context is unique to Malarrak 1. All beads were recovered later during laboratory sorting of the 3 mm sieve residues. As the bead from Malarrak 1 was not recovered in situ, we cannot determine whether it was located within areas of the excavation associated with the post-hole disturbance. Therefore, we cannot exclude the likelihood of vertical movement of this artefact. Likewise, the sample that returned a date of 1436–1490 AD was taken from the northwest corner of SgQ25 in the concentrated area of post-holes where there was the highest likelihood of vertical movement (Table 3). Owing to the invisibility of these post-hole features in SU 1, we must treat any association of radiocarbon dates with cultural materials cautiously. These post-holes highlight the issue that Indigenous use of rockshelter sites can cause disturbance to the cultural deposits, which in turn can create significant interpretation issues. In spite of this, the bead is still located well within the vertical distribution that also contained contact artefacts and was not an outlier in the overall contact assemblage.

Bead Classification Methodology

Owing to the lack of published contact beads from archaeological contexts, our methodology draws on the general body of Australian historical archaeological research and international bead classification standards (cf. Allen 1996; Birmingham and Wilson 1987; Casey 2004; Casey and Lowe 2010; Crook 1999; Iacono 1996; Thorp 1990; Varman 2003; Wood 2011). In Australia, historical archaeologists have generally inferred that beads at contact period sites were used for personal use, could be assigned to gender, used in clothing (embroidery), jewellery or in religious practices (i.e. rosary beads) (cf. Allen 1996; Birmingham and Wilson 1987; Casey 2004; Casey and Lowe 2010; Crook 1999, Thorp 1990; Varman 2003). Crook (1999:56–57 and Iacono (1996:20–23) noted that beads could be made from glass, coral, chalcedony, agate, jet, rose quartz, ceramic, metal, shell, wood, bone, faience, ivory and casein. Beads from these studies have generally been classified by shape, material, colour and size (Casey and Lowe 2010; Crook 1999; Higginbotham 1991; Iacono 1996).

For this project, individual beads were counted and photographed, and attributes of manufacture method, raw material, structure, shape, size, end treatment, colour, diaphanity, lustre and patination were assessed following Wood (2011:68). Some of these results are presented in the following section. In keeping with the intention of standardising and simplifying bead cataloguing, we adopt Wood’s systematic method of classification (which built upon those by Beck 1928; Karklins 1985; Kidd and Kidd 1970; Ross 2003). This is essential for maintaining a baseline standard for investigating beads, and is imperative if data are to be used to contextualise results more widely. We aim to further refine the preliminary classifications through the use of chemical characterisation in the future; this will also aid in assigning production sources and dates to the beads.

Table 2
Summary of stratigraphic information for beads from the Wellington Range archaeological sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Bead ID</th>
<th>Square</th>
<th>Excavation Unit</th>
<th>Depth Below Surface (cm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Djurrlirri</td>
<td>1–12</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4 Surface Surface</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malarrak 4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2 1–2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malarrak 4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3 2–4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malarrak 4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4 4–6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malarrak 4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4 4–6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malarrak 4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6 11–15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Rock 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>3 3–4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Rock 1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>3 3–4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Rock 1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>6 6–7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Rock 3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 0–4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Rock 3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 4–7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Bald Rock 3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 7–9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Rock 3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 9–11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Rock 2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 12.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malarrak 1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>G25</td>
<td>6 11.5–15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Radiocarbon results from Malarrak 1, Malarrak 4 and Bald Rock 1. All samples were charcoal (OxCal 4.2.2).
Malarrak 1, Malarrak 4 and Bald Rock 1 were very likely contact periods. They imply that the beads recovered from assemblage strongly within the Macassan and European account, the radiocarbon dates tend to group the bead taking taphonomic and post-depositional factors into chemical characterisation.

Bead Assemblage Interpretation

Using stylistic and comparative analyses, the beads were assigned to preliminary types (Table 4). Large lamp wound/wound beads (Figure 7), seed beads (Figure 8), bugle beads (Figure 9), blown beads (Figure 10), a faceted spheroidal mould pressed bead, a carved stone bead (Figure 11) and a drip/splatter (Figure 12). We have assigned broad categories following Wood (2011:70). The dominant manufacturing technique was drawn, followed by molded, wound and lamp technique was drawn, followed by molded, wound and lamp manufacturing method was not able to be assessed for the drip/splatter. All beads had a simple structure. Lustre was dull on eight beads and shiny on 21.Using stylistic and comparative analyses, the beads were assigned to preliminary types (Table 4). Large lamp wound/wound beads (Figure 7), seed beads (Figure 8), bugle beads (Figure 9), blown beads (Figure 10), a faceted spheroidal mould pressed bead, a carved stone bead (Figure 11) and a drip/splatter (Figure 12). We have assigned broad categories to likely western European (i.e. Venetian, French and Dutch) and eastern European (i.e. Czech) bead production centres, which we aim to refine further in future through the use of chemical characterisation.

Bead Assemblage Interpretation

Taking taphonomic and post-depositional factors into account, the radiocarbon dates tend to group the bead assemblage strongly within the Macassan and European contact periods. They imply that the beads recovered from Malarrak 1, Malarrak 4 and Bald Rock 1 were very likely deposited at some time after the early 18th century, possibly up to the early 20th century. The two Malarrak 1 dates span a possible period of 485 years. We are not proposing here that the bead from Malarrak 1 is linked to the 1436–1490 cal AD date, but rather that this association is likely the result of post-depositional movement. Bald Rock 1 also demonstrates that a bead with a likely production date of post-1900 can move downwards in a deposit, highlighting the difficulty of dating beads by association, an issue raised elsewhere (e.g. Robertshaw et al. 2014:602). Nevertheless, we argue that the majority of the Wellington Range beads are strongly linked to the post-1800 AD period. This conclusion is supported by their association with other contact materials.

These beads would have become incorporated into the archaeological record via several different mechanisms, i.e. deposited as singular objects, as constituents of a larger material culture item that was traded or gifted to people prior to arrival at the site, and eventually discarded or ‘lost’, or, alternatively, during the process of bead work at the site. The blue glass drip from Bald Rock 1 (Figure 12) may be an indication of what Francis (1990:15) described: i.e. that beads were commonly strung in preparation for export to indicate to the buyer that the product was fit for purpose, thereby increasing their value. However, they could also be sold loose in bulk, allowing for the purposeful or accidental inclusions of drips, splatters or ‘knots’ in the lot. Their presence at Bald Rock 1 does suggest strongly that bead stringing was occurring there, as such refuse arrives in packages of beads, rather than as strung items (Francis 1990:15). There is no other evidence for contact bead-stringing/work occurring in the Wellington Range, and the only other known bead waste products have been found at Red Lily Lagoon, where the assemblage contained both knots and drips (Wesley and Litster unpub. data). Whilst these refuse materials have not been found in dated contexts, future chemical characterisation of these artefacts aims to refine the chronology for potential contact bead stringing in the area. The Wellington Range bead types are diverse and could have served a variety of decorative functions. Seed, bugle and blown beads are known to have been used in the production of various objects during the contact period, from simple string necklaces, chokers and embroidery, to complex decorative beaded designs on items such as bags. Owing to the variable uses of these particular bead types and the low sample size present, it is difficult to posit any definitive
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact ID</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Method of Manufacture</th>
<th>Size Range</th>
<th>Diaphaneity</th>
<th>Shape</th>
<th>Colour Group</th>
<th>Site and Context</th>
<th>Potential Place of Manufacture</th>
<th>Relationship to Calibrated Radiocarbon Dates Cal AD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wound/lamp wound bead (conjoin #25)</td>
<td>Wound/Lamp Wound</td>
<td>Very large</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Sphere</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Red-Purple</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Red-Purple</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Translucent-Transparent</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Red-Purple</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bugle bead (hexagonal section)</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Translucent</td>
<td>Tube</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bugle bead (hexagonal section)</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Translucent</td>
<td>Tube</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Translucent-Transparent</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Purple-Blue</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Molded</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Translucent-Transparent</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Molded</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Translucent-Transparent</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Purple</td>
<td>Djulirri, Surface</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Red-Purple</td>
<td>Malarrak 4, Sq11, XU2</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>Above 1720–1819 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Malarrak 4, Sq11, XU3</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Above 1720–1819 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Wound</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Translucent-Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Purple-Blue</td>
<td>Malarrak 4, Sq11, XU4</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>Above 1720–1819 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Stone bead</td>
<td>Carved</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Malarrak 4, Sq11, XU4</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Above 1720–1819 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Translucent-Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Purple-Blue</td>
<td>Malarrak 4, Sq11, XU6</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Above 1720–1819 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Glass ‘drip’ or ‘splatter’</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Translucent</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Purple-Blue</td>
<td>Bald Rock 1, SqA1, XU3</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Above 1668–1780 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Opaque</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Red-Purple</td>
<td>Bald Rock 1, SqA1, XU3</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>Above 1668–1780 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Seed bead</td>
<td>Molded</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Translucent</td>
<td>Oblate</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Bald Rock 1, SqA1, XU6</td>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>Below 1668–1780 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bugle bead (hexagonal section)</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Translucent</td>
<td>Tube</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Bald Rock 3, Sq1, XU2</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bugle bead (hexagonal section)</td>
<td>Drawn</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Translucent</td>
<td>Tube</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Bald Rock 3, Sq1, XU3</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Wellington Range bead assemblage by interpretation, selected descriptive attributes, potential place of manufacture and relationship to radiocarbon dates.
arguments concerning what material culture these beads originally belonged to.

Potential inter-site use is also suggested by the bead data. The two blue broken segments of a lamp wound/wound bead from Malarrak 4 and Djulirri (Figure 7) appear to conjoin (ID1 and ID25). The circumstances of how two halves of a single bead came to be deposited at sites separated by 5 km is unknown, but if this is the case it would suggest that both sites were being utilised by the same people. Long-distance exchange of valuable material for personal adornment has been established in Australia (Balme and Morse 2006; McAdam 2009); however, it is also important to consider that the bead manufacturing process could result in stress flaw irregularities, resulting in multiple beads fracturing in the same manner. Therefore, at this stage we are counting these two halves as separate artefacts until the broken faces can be 3D-scanned to determine if they are indeed from the same bead.

The vector for bead exchange is difficult to assign, as with all traded items it is difficult to attribute an agent to one particular exchange. The bulk of the beads present at the sites were oblate, monochrome drawn beads (Figure 8). This type was produced in Europe (France, central Europe and Venice) in the 19th century in large quantities, and thereafter widely distributed throughout Europe and into South East Asia (Adhyatman and Arifin 1993:89). Small oblate beads and seed beads are the type most commonly seen in the choker necklaces depicted ethnographically from Arnhem Land, but are also commonly found at
Australian post-contact sites (cf. Allen 1996; Birmingham 1976; Birmingham and Wilson 1987; Crook 1999; Iacono 1996; Thorp 1990; Varman 2003). Therefore, attributing an agent to the exchange of particular European beads becomes a problematic exercise. Additionally, one carved stone bead found at Malarrak 4 (see Figure 11) is not of the local geology (we have tested this bead with HCl and confirmed that it is not limestone). However, the origin of this particular bead and who distributed it is unknown.

We can, however, eliminate certain bead types as being introduced via Macassan trepangers. This likely includes molded seed beads, which became incorporated into the South East Asian area post-1900 (Francis 1996:3, 2002:180). Macassan activities along the north Australian coast ceased after Commonwealth legislation forbidding their entry was enacted in 1906–1907; it is therefore unlikely that any molded seed beads found at the sites were introduced via Macassan trepangers. The remaining bead types present at the Wellington Range sites are, however, likely to have been distributed via either Europeans or Macassans.

Discussion

There has been very little previous elaboration on beads from archaeological contexts in northern Australia, where they are mostly discussed as a component of a general corpus of Macassan trade goods used to assign the sites from which they are recovered to broad temporal categories (Clarke 1994, 2000; Mitchell 1994, 1996). In addition to the contribution they can make to chronology building, Mitchell (1996) suggested that introduced trade goods were accorded a high status by Indigenous people and, as such, were immediately traded to other groups. Thus, beads might potentially also reveal significant information about trade and exchange networks.

The research presented here provides an argument that beads formed part of both the Macassan and European culture contact periods. Beads have been found in Macassan trepang processing site contexts and now are clearly shown to be located in nearby rockshelter sites in the Wellington Range. Although there is currently no archaeological evidence of beads from NT mission settlements, we know from previous research from Wybalenna and Ooldea Soak that beads were part of Christian mission material culture assemblages (Birmingham 1976; Brockwell et al. 1989). Missions did not gain a foothold in western Arnhem Land until the establishment of the Goulburn Island mission in ca 1916 and Gunbalanya in 1925. However, ethnographic, historical and archaeological data provide evidence for beads in Indigenous society in both the pre- and early mission era. Accordingly, the mechanisms through which beads have entered Indigenous society are far more complex than a simple interpretation of their having been distributed by missionaries.

We choose to examine these transactions through Altman’s hybrid economic model, in which goods entered Indigenous society through a complex means of engagement between differing economies. The fact that Tiwi Islanders were demanding ‘beads’ from Dutch sailors in 1705 illustrates that these items were already highly sought after in the early 18th century, suggesting knowledge gained from likely non-European sources, i.e. Macassans or other mariners (Forrest 1995:15–16). We suggest that beads, or beaded items, formed part of a repertoire of exchange.

![Figure 9](image9.jpg) Hexagonal bugle beads (left = ID6; right = ID7) from Djulirri.

![Figure 10](image10.jpg) Bead ID24 from Bald Rock 3. This is a clear blown bead with end collars.

![Figure 11](image11.jpg) Stone carved bead (ID65) from Malarrak 4.

![Figure 12](image12.jpg) Translucent blue ‘drip’ or ‘splatter’ (ID18) from Bald Rock 1.
items that Indigenous people explicitly sought through their interactions with either Macassan and/or European economies. Altman (2006) contended that this demand was based on the traditional significance that beads held within the Indigenous customary economy. The importance of beaded objects to Indigenous society through to the 20th century is testament to the incorporation of the introduced glass beads into customary practice. Furthermore, it is important to examine the importance of the translocation of beads as illustrated through the potential conjoin of ID1 and ID25 recovered from two different sites. This evidence suggests that, if even half a bead is of customary value, beads could occupy a different ‘place’ for the traditional owners than they do in Macassan and European economies.

At another level, quantifying bead assemblages in Arnhem Land sites may provide an opportunity to assess the level of non-monetised Indigenous customary practices which contributed to the Macassan and European market economies. It is important to note that material goods were being offered in exchange for labour during the period of state sector interactions with Indigenous people. Labour exchange signifies participation in colonial and maritime economies, rather than simply being gifting behaviour. The presence of beads is not only likely to represent labour exchange, but may reflect the end result of negotiation for access to land and sea. This is decided by traditional owners through customary decision making processes that need to take into account a variety of issues, including land rights and sacred sites.

Another aspect of examining archaeological beads relates to the flexibility of, and changes to, Indigenous technology during the culture-contact period (Hiscock 2008:275–283). Hiscock and Clarkson (2000:103) discussed issues surrounding the impact of introduced materials on stone artefact technologies. They observed the potential for the modification of manufacturing activities in response to the introduction of European and Asian materials and the potential of this for altering pre-existing technological systems (Hiscock and Clarkson 2000:103). This is very relevant to sites in the Wellington Range, where evidence for bottle glass flaking occurs at Malarrak 4, Djulirri and Bald Rock 1. Evidence for unstrung beads at Bald Rock 1 would suggest that they were arriving at the site for the purpose of beadwork, potentially becoming incorporated within, or altering, existing material culture systems.

Additionally, the presence of beaded objects may have led to visual transformations in local rock art complexes, where depictions of beads and beaded objects may have become incorporated into existing artistic traditions (McDonald and Veth 2012). McAdam (2009) and Chaloupka (1993) observed beaded objects depicted in rock art. It is possible that further archaeological evidence for beaded objects are found in the rock art at another Wellington Range site: Marligur. Marligur contains two painted female anthropomorphic figures depicted with ‘lines’ across the neck area—potentially indicating a beaded necklace or choker (Figure 13). Chaloupka (1993, 1996) further posited that the decorative infill painted on the clothing of these figures was influenced by the diamond designs present in Indonesian textiles and beaded chokers and belts.

It has also been well documented that Indigenous people travelled to and from Sulawesi with Macassans, which would have significantly increased their exposure to island South East Asian material culture, including textiles and beaded objects (Lamilami 1974). The argument for beads and beaded items arriving in Arnhem Land from a Macassan origin is furthered by a resemblance between the style, motif design, choker choice and beads available in eastern Indonesia (Departmen Pendidikan dan Kebudayan 1997) and the historical beaded objects collected in western Arnhem Land donated to the British Museum. The latter and those shown in Spencer’s photographs are arguably very similar in design, construction and pattern to those found in Sulawesi and surrounds, though we acknowledge the ubiquity of such a diamond motif and the similarity in choker designs in varied cultural contexts.

Finally, the inclusion of the Makassarese words for beads—manik-manik and manimani—into local languages is another indicator of the Macassan exchange of these objects (Evans 1992). In an examination of the distribution of maritime loan words around the Indian Ocean, Fuller et al. (2011) argued that many languages often prefer a descriptive local word above a foreign loan word, even if the item is introduced. However, in Arnhem Land, Makassarese, Bugis and Malay words were readily incorporated into local coastal Aboriginal languages for items of introduced material culture (Evans 1992). This highlights an important context for the pre-European introduction of beads into Indigenous society and further serves to illustrate a case for beads and beaded objects being part of a hybrid economy developed between Macassans and Indigenous groups during the trepang industry.

Conclusion

The Wellington Range bead assemblage includes those exchanged through South East Asian maritime networks...
and by European settlers in Australia during the 18th to early 20th centuries. Although chemical characterisation might further refine where they were produced, the importance here is that their description and presence provide insights into Indigenous-Macassan-European culture contact and associated mechanisms of exchange.

We propose that the introduction of beads and/or beaded items to northern Australia began with Macassans in the 18th century. There is a chronological overlap of Macassan economies with the expansion of the British into northern Australia in the 19th century. The incorporation of beads as a component of the Macassan-Indigenous trade repertoire thereby provided continuity for Indigenous people to obtain specific desirable trade items from their later interactions with European economies. Accordingly, by applying Altman’s hybrid economy model, if beads are not simply an exchange for labour, or a gift, they very likely represent the individual expression of customary rights in negotiating with Macassan and European economies. As Altman (2006) indicated, the peculiarities of the situations that arose between Macassans, Europeans and Indigenous people, likely made beads a specific demand item for Indigenous co-operation and involvement in these non-customary enterprises. While these foreign economies, i.e. trepang fishing, buffalo shooting, pearl mining and pastoralism, were forced upon Indigenous people, the model provides us with a mechanism through which to understand aspects of Indigenous control of, and justification for, these interactions. Rather than the extremes of passive acceptance or violent resistance, Altman’s (2001, 2006, 2007) model illuminates the conscious decisions made by traditional owners within a customary rights framework. This concerns the extent to which they interacted with others and what their desired outcomes were for such exchanges, such as allowing others to be on their country and to utilise their resources. Without such negotiations, the anticipated customary response would have been continual conflict in response to transgressions on country. Although violence is documented between Indigenous groups, Macassans and Europeans, this view is balanced by the evidence for cooperation and facilitation as illustrated by the presence of traded items, including the beads recovered from the Wellington Range archaeological sites.

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