

The M'Ivor Times

SE Environment
HD **G'day dear reader,**
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G'day dear reader,

Australia once was without human inhabitation. We're told the first flight of Aborigines came down through India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) making it as far as Tasmania. They walked across the land bridges that have since become covered in water. But not before the second flight arrived and effectively eliminated the smaller statured first arrivals.

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All that was 40,000 to 60,000 years ago. Since then, the next major invasion was the unwanted convicts of Britain.

They'd pipped the French who were only a little more interested than Dirk Hartog who left his pewter plate in the west. Magellan missed the place, but the Portuguese and folks in canoes from what is now Indonesia and other islands to our north, didn't.

But in the 1300s, the **Chinese** made it to our northern shores. At that time, the Ming Dynasty were masters of the world's largest fleet of ocean-going craft. These massive junks were commanded by Admiral Zheng. He, bringing them to Australia as he searched for spices. Many of his crew stayed in our north and intermarried (if that's the right word) with the locals.

If today one visits the hinterland of our Far North one will find Aborigines with Asian features. (And some Asian names too.) This leads me to conclude that Aboriginal art found today may have been influenced by those **Chinese**.

You see, the Australian Aborigine hasn't really had much, if any, cultural contact with outside societies other than those **Chinese**. All the others scampered after finding the landscape inhospitable. (Except the Poms. But they left the hard work to the Irish.)

But, as regards to art, the British were moribund. Anyway, they were invaders with their guns, infection and arrogance, therefore they never really integrated with the locals. Their warm beer never took hold, nor did Gainsborough or Turner.

Mind you, though Albert Namatjira took on the European style of painting none of the other Aboriginal artists did so.

Apart from poor old Albert, (whom our bureaucrats wouldn't let **buy** a house plot because he was black) the Aborigines ignored our art and, in fact anyone else's except that of those ancient **Chinese** (or so I say).

Part of my reasoning is that the **Chinese** worship dragons. The Australian Aborigine glorifies snakes. They both decorate the dragon and the snake with symbols and designs. Both are brightly coloured and are depicted as fierce or gentle. They interact well with humans and both are attributed with magical powers. Also, the Aboriginal rock paintings, which plainly show square-sailed ships are, in my opinion, those junks of Zheng. His fleet — not Captain Cook's Endeavour as the early Anglophile who discovered the rock paintings believed them to be.

Dear reader, every cultures' art is influenced by others' art as the artisans are exposed to it.

If that's so, then one can maybe understand my rationale regarding the **Chinese** intrusion into Aboriginal culture and art. (And remember, the dot painting **business** is only a recent addition to their portfolio and is reminiscent of many other primitive art.)

OK. But what has all the above to do with our region?

Well, in my long-winded way, I'm underlining that all groups of people take on in part, other groups' standards or customs.

Japan is renowned for its Tempura batter which, in fact, was brought to Japan by the Portuguese. The Greeks statuary influenced Michelangelo. Picasso influenced world art. And so it goes on. And as art is communication, I reason the art of communicating the wonders of our area should take a leaf out of the marketing of the New Zealanders.

Look how they changed the **Chinese** gooseberry into Kiwi fruit. And without a murmur of protest from the **Chinese**.

There are many other examples which I don't have space to list. Suffice to say the Kiwis have the wit to market whatever they feel is important to bring to the attention of the commercial world.

So should we. Our region is equal, in many areas, to any other which produces dramatic panoramic vistas as well as ripper red **wine**.

Sure the Coonawarra, the Clare and Barossa are revered but we can elbow them aside, eh.

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