



A long labour of love dedicated to the Gälpu mala of North East Arnhem land and the remarkable Gurruwiwi family, 40 days and 40 nights of inquiry and thought over the course of 2022, a journey from Kangaroo Valley to Arnhem Land to Cairns and back to Kangaroo Valley. Nothing is settled and yet everything is.

D.W. Gurruwiwi: Yidaki Power, 1933-2022

Njanapu narru rakuyin.
Nayam. Dhanalim narru
bitjan, "DjWG'wun dhanu
dhoka naya yaka.
Nay' nhumalingum
yutamam. Nay nyelingu. Nay nhungum."

We will die. I will.
They will say,
"DjWG has made the way.
Here, renewed for all of you.
Here, for you. Here for you".

D.W. Gurruwiwi (DjWG), 2002, Translation by Randin
Graves, Waymamba Gaykamaru, D.S. Gurruwiwi

But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you
a more excellent way.

Corinthians, 12.31

I came home because of a charred tree trunk filled with
honey

B.R. 2014

Foreword: The Secular and the Sacred

At Garma 2022 in August a controversy arose amongst the Gurruwiwi family. The film *Westwind D's Legacy* was scheduled to be shown. D.W. Gurruwiwi's image and face would be seen soon after his passing and before his bāpurru. Many of us did not want the film to be shown. But others including Mr. Gurruwiwi's wife Dopiya, perhaps following the wishes of her late husband, wanted it to be shown and their views naturally prevailed. Before Dr. M. Yunupingu and G.G. Yunupingu and Mr. Gurruwiwi such a controversy would never have arisen. Before these men there were no Yolŋu gurus and rock stars whose images were cast all over social media or in documentaries and films in national and international contexts. The names and images of human beings, whether they be heroes or great statesmen or women, would be withheld from public and private discourse for a long mourning period to enable the soul to make an easy transition to the paradise, baralku and not linger on the earth.

The secular "mainstream" world and the "sacred" world of Yolŋu spirituality had collided. It was an inevitable conflict. Had the Yolŋu musicians and statesmen of the late 20th and early 21st century broken through the world of earthly fame or had the values of mainstream fame and success overtaken Yolŋu customary law? There are no easy answers to this question and perhaps there is no definitive correct position.

Like Dr. M. Yunupingu and G.G. Yunupingu, Mr Gurruwiwi had created 'a new pathway in the world' with many considerations and implications. *Westwind* itself makes much of a new pathway for yolŋu in the mainstream world. Will old traditions be replaced? Does the mainstream complement and extend yolŋu life? Or are such developments destructive of Yolŋu customary law and more importantly of people's spiritual health? These too are not easy questions to answer. I know firsthand that these matters never phased D.W. Gurruwiwi or his late sister whom I knew very well and whom adopted me as wāwa. Both embraced mainstream life and

education with no hesitation.

Nevertheless there are no pictures of D.W. Gurruwiwi (DjWG) here, nor is his name spelled out in full throughout this text in accordance with the traditional Yolŋu custom. However, it should also be observed there was no writing in traditional society and it was more the sound of a person's name after death that was considered distressing, harmful and strictly formbidden. There is nothing that can be done now about the recorded voice and publication of so many photographs of this iconic man available through social media, films and other sources. There is an understandable view that something might be lost if these images were not allowed to be seen. But in many ways this is a defining issue. Something to think long and hard about. It is the case that our secular age has roughly intruded into the customary practices of Yolŋu culture. The mainstream world is wholesale ignorant of Yolŋu customary law and ceremony. It is also the case that much is threatened, including the integrity of Yolŋu ceremony by such rude shocks. Young people move away from the discipline and ascetism of traditional life. A twilight zone of living between two cultures prevails often with very negative consequences.

One of DjWG's principle contributions was that he brought the sacred and the mysterious dimensions of the spiritual universe to our profoundly secular world. He added something to the best European traditions of Christianity. The power that comes from his bāpurru and his life example go far beyond photographs an existence, a person or the articulation of a name. The frail human form declines and the spirit returns to burrakku, healing and love are transmitted across all the dimensions of time and space, and true peace follows for us all. There is a selective group of pictures from the Yirrkala bāpurru linked to this article^[1] and there is also a brief directory of Yolŋu words used in this article at the end. We will all know when it is time for photographic

1 D.W. Gurruwiwi, Bāpurru, Yirrkala, 8-25 September, 2022 <https://express.adobe.com/page/bujak6l8ibyY8/>

images and the sound of his name to once again be uttered safely.

Included in this text also is a link to a very important and neglected film of D.W. Gurruwiwi's sister, D.S. Gurruwiwi from around 2008. This is because after 2 or more years of mourning her passing, her contribution needs once more to be appreciated and she would particularly want her feelings to be remembered in relation to her son G. Dhurrkay and also the future of the yidaki as something for her Gälpu family and other Yolŋu malas to build upon in the future. She wanted her daughters, sons and grand daughters involved in a foundation to commemorate G. Dhurrkay - who as the most famous Yolŋu AFL player created a similar conflict of remembrance after his tragic passing. In making the link to Ms. Gurruwiwi's film we are guided by the period of waiting and thinking that took place after Mrs. P.B. Burrarwanga's passing. Only after a period of a year or more was the film of her walk across Arnhem land in which she retraced the footsteps of her father, Dhukarr Yäkthun (Re-making the Pathway) shown. That film too was specifically left for her children and grand children to watch and think about in their own lives far into the future.

As this last draft of many drafts of this dhäwu came near to completion there was a profound feeling that it would be judged lunacy by many modern-day readers and heretical or perhaps of no consequence by many Yolŋu. This feeling hung around for many days and weeks; perhaps the whole of it should be dispatched to the wastepaper basket. A conversation with one of the iconic musicians of the 1970s Nic Cage aired on ABC radio. Cage was a great exemplar of dark 1970s grunge. There was something in Nic's earnest talk about attending church and his need for some kind of conversation with the divine after the loss of his sons that made the meaning of D.W. Gurruwiwi for secular Australian society come back to life. Can there be a more profoundly secular and prosaic place than mainstream Australia? So ordinary and mundane and common sensical and lost! DjWG put

us on the pathway towards the spiritual and sacred qualities of this land and perhaps something universally needed by each and every one of us: love.

As these words were written a giant diamond python came into the bathroom of the office wrapped itself around the shower and departed as if to say.. now these words are on the track. Its okay. After coming to know the magic of Arnhem land these incidental events of life have new meaning and significance because the land and the animals do talk to us if we have the ability to listen.

In trying to understand DjWG's effect on people, the life of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) is a point of comparison. Bhagavan taught that the redeeming source of the crazy "I" that bedevils us all is the sacred heart of love. The I disappears into love. Bhagavan influenced many millions of people around the world. He left us with a famous book: "Who am I?" DjWG has left us with the profound vibrations of the yidaki. This is a bit harder to write about, but nonetheless, as was said of Bhagavan, DjWG valued most, those who came to him in silence and left in silence. It reminds us of the impossibility and uselessness of words when talking about the sacred dimension that DjWG commanded and which is present, deep down in the spiritual practices and ceremonies of all of the clans and malas of the Yolngu people.

Australia goes into a new year, 2023, with the prospect of adding the sage knowledge of our first peoples as a "voice" to enable our politicians and our parliament and our constitution to define our past and our future. This "voice" can bring knowledge precious and sacred, the oldest and most overlooked gurus in the world. This "voice" is not a substitute, but a pathway towards many treaties with Aboriginal people across the continent. There are hundreds of heritages and sacred stories and places. This was what DjGW was referring to when he said he had "made the way" for all of us. The vibrations of his yidaki are there to illuminate these

DjWG

worlds.

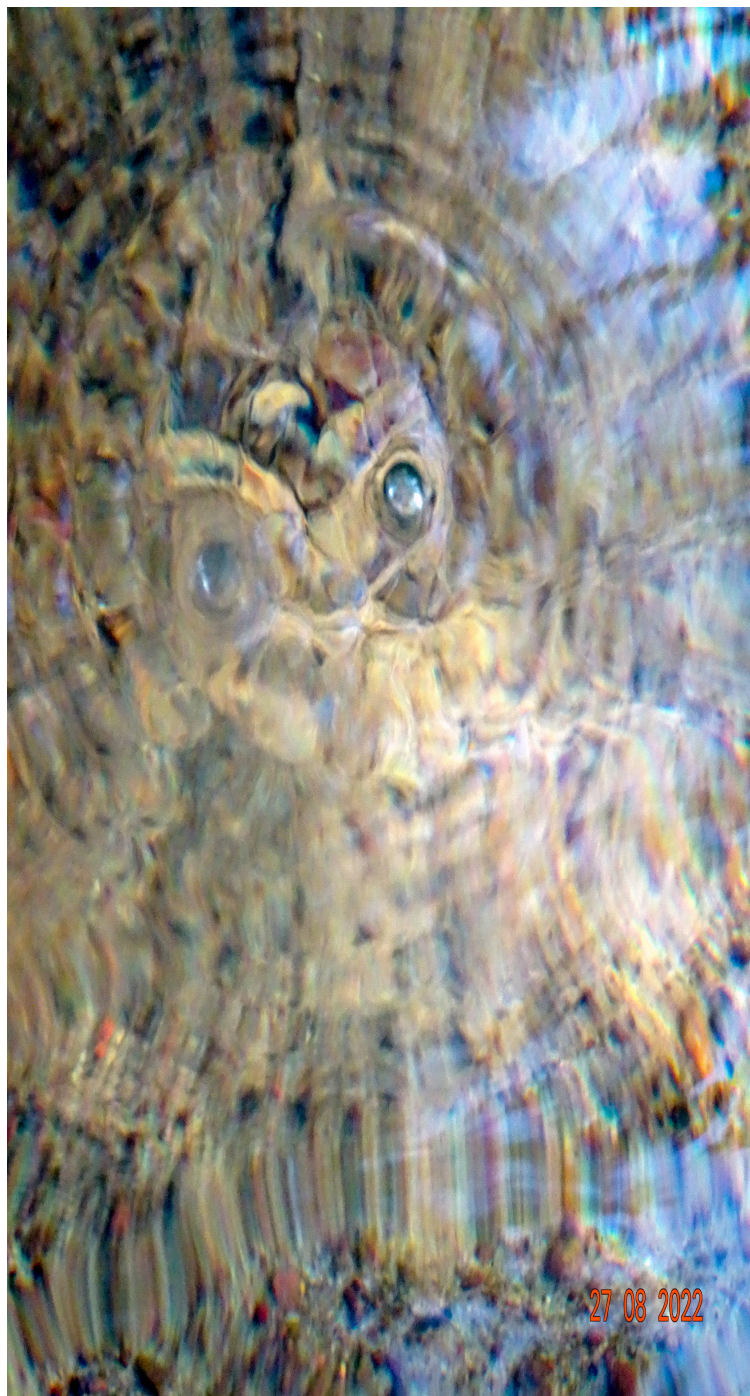
DjWG brought love to all. Without a meeting around his campfire at Garma between DjWG, Brigitte Ross and myself there would not have been the capacity to understand fully the nature of the grace he offered us all. For these things there can only be eternal thanks and gratitude.

PCB

Christmas 2022

D.W. Gurruwiwi's (DjWG) - yidaki power - drew many pilgrims. They were looking for a home, for meaning and for a connection. Some had dreams and wanted to know what they meant. Some were sick. Some were dying. Some wanted to resolve traumas. Some wanted to know about this thing they called a didgeridu. Some were simply curious tourists who had heard about this Aboriginal "guru"(Daley, 2014, Sept 8) and wanted to buy an artefact or curio to take home. Many people had no idea who he was but after his healing, all acknowledged they got something they would never forget. If you asked, he would find his favourite yidaki and play it directly into your heart. The vibration and sound seemed to resonate differently for each person, tuned for every human form. When the sound resonated within your body it was as if a wave of holy water cleansed you inside and out. It cured the most profound maladies or helped you on your way or cleared all of your brain cells and nerve endings, as the case may be. Where did this power come from? 'I have taken away the shadows and brought in the light', he would say. "I feel better already" said Charles, now King of England. Charles was not alone. Individuals, families, some sick or grieving, some spiritually hungry, opened their eyes and felt something remarkable. You could see their wide-eyed surprise and feel their immediate gratitude. DjWG's yidaki brought something like a saint's blessing, it was a trumpet from God. Whose God? We may well ask: a Christian saviour of 2000 years duration? or ancestral heroes of 60-100,000 years duration? Maybe both. "Behold I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Corinthians, 15.50 DjWG would say the yidaki was his window into another dimension. "I can see inside you, there was something there. It is cleared now". In Buddhist terms the vibration took you into a dimension of aimless fearless empty space on the

edge of nirvana. With the vibration there was a possibility that human existence itself might be put on hold for a brief moment in time, and re-engineered with love. In the last year of his life DjWG refused medications and dialysis and this, by all scientific medical accounts, should have killed him immediately. But he lived on, powered by a gossamer thread of spirit and yidaki power, as if to tell us: 'There are more things in heaven and earth that are dreamt of in your philosophy.' Even fierce bio-medical skeptics concede, as is also increasingly the case for the ngangkari of Central Australia and many Aboriginal communities across the world, there is healing that cannot be understood in conventional bio-medical, scientific terms. (Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yanku-nytjatjara Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation.) (Dau, 1975, March) (MH, TG, & H, 2017, Jan 26) Who was this man, where did he come from and what were his powers? What did it all mean? Was it all a matter of placebos and self belief? The dhäwu is deep and these words are surface scratchings, the real knowledge comes from the Gälpu and the other Yolŋu malas and also about being in the right place at the right time with the person who is able to share, but these words are a start for the many who were profoundly touched by this man and his family.



II

Narranydja yothu Djärimirri, Djärimirri
Wititjkuṇu goḷanhara, Djärimirr..i m..m

I am a child of the rainbow
Carried by wititj, rainbow power
(G. G. Yunupingu)

People simply turned up at DjWG's house at Birritjimi in North East Arnhem. He was "healing the world" in the late 1990s and 2000s. (Botsman) He had something that Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal Australians and international visitors from all over the world wanted. If you play back the sound of his healing yidaki, (*D Gurruwiwi, Garndawuy, & Gurruwiwi, 2008*) the vibration touches some deep essence that links all of humanity. It is derived from Gälpu manikay foundations but it is something new in world spirituality. DjWG was a great representative of the Aboriginal people of Australia but perhaps he went beyond that; and this seems luminously evident at a time where there is so much war and conflict in the world. He exuded peace, love and calm. He recognized something in those who came independently to the sound of the didgeridu, even those who began by playing vacuum cleaner and pvc pipes! He was generous and kind to all. But it was not always so, his life and yidaki was forged in conflict. DjWG combined the deep wisdom of Yolṇu culture with, the balanda figure Yolṇu people most respected, Garray. In this DjWG was a transformational man or as Will Stubbs¹ has said "a force of nature".

DjWG was born on, or came in a dream to his parents, at Wirriku, the smallest of the Wessell Islands. His birth was officially recorded at Millingimbi along with two brothers in 1930. No-one can definitively say when or where he was born, but he was the oldest of the Yolṇu clan leaders from 2015 onwards, to my knowledge only Baymarwanṅa - the batala buṅgawa of the Crocodile Islands - was his senior.

Wirriku was a place of power for the Gälpu. A sacred painting of wititj (rainbow serpent) is in a cave on the neighbouring island of Rarragala. The fully sized wititj, his sister said, as she fished from rocks and searched for man-grove mussels, could be routinely seen by men and women of 'high degree', travelling through these islands and moving down into holes in the saltwater and appearing often at djārimi (rainbow river, Gälpu sp.) and Gi'kal one of the important Gälpu homelands.

It was a serpent that made deep hills and groves hundreds of kilometres long. 'If you squint your eyes at sunset you might see wititj travelling', she said. And in the hills around she would point out the form and shape of his great body. On the road to Gi'kal you can see his his journey and along stretches of the Central Arnhem Highway wititj is there alongside the road for miles and miles.

"As it settles down, it sends its voice or the sound throughout the escarpment where it can be heard then the wind catches the sound and carries it away"
(DW Gurruwiwi, 2003)

After staying overnight at Rocky Creek on the road in from Darwin with his grand daughters, DjWG asked: was wititj's breath there in the early evening and morning? There were these tufts of wind, like breath - a slightly uncomfortable realisation. 'Wititj is as real as you or I', he said. When they were making the road to Mata Mata and Gi'kal a giant D40 bulldozer came too close to wititj's path and was in danger of literally being swallowed in the earth. DjWG had to plot a different course for the road that seemed to defy reason to the contractors, if only for the fact that it saved their bulldozer and heavy equipment. After telling this story, his sister also said 'Wititj is as real as you or I'.

DjWG held the knowledge and the spiritual power of this omnipotent wititj being, source of thunder, it's tongue striking lightning bringing fertility and wellbeing to the land. Legend has it that DjWG had been hit by lightning twice.

DjWG

Coming to djärimi with DjWG, his sister, son, wife and family. singing the songs of G. Yunupingu, then unknown to the wider world, was a powerful revelation. A bump would stop the Saltwater Band CD (Band) in the troop carrier and the children would sing on uninterrupted in a way that deeply moved everyone. They knew the words. They knew the feeling. G.G. Yunupingu's mother was Gälpu and his song Djärimirri (Gumatj sp.) tells of the deep power of the rainbow that was at the heart of DjWG and his family's healing power and philosophy. (G. G. Yunupingu)

Children are told be careful not to splash at djärimi and to be respectful or else the sky will open up, or lest wititj be disturbed. The sacred rainbow waters will heal ailments and mental illness. Broken relationships and troubles are all soothed here. The white clay of the djärimi springs that spill out onto the beach and into the saltwater at Gi'kal is revered. The deep words of Gälpu manikay celebrates the bubbles that emerge from the sand and through the water, a metaphor for knowledge and power emerging. There is this balance of electricity and power and softness and calm - all part of DjWG's healing practices. G.G. Yunupingu made djärimirri famous with his wondrous song of the rainbow child and many underground songs recorded by Gälpu singers are shunted around via mobile phones and played deep into the night through powerful speakers at funerals helping everyone to sleep. Bubbles in the water... life force, energy, knowledge and power emerging..

DjWG and his family draw their ability to heal from this essence of wititj, rainbow power and djärimi and many other things known to the Gälpu family. The yidakis he crafted also had special qualities. The famous baywara yidaki conveyed the power of lightning and thunder and the djuŋar-riny yidakis were long and deep sounding instruments with a gentle, soothing sound the vibrations of wititj itself. (D. Gurruwiwi)

After his funeral ended at Yirrkala on Sunday 26 September,

2022 a great calm prevailed and then for two days it was as if the wet season had begun early. The thunder rolled in followed by sheets of rain. Usually at the end of ceremonies everyone is cleansed with a hose and all the emotions and intensity dissolve. No hoses were necessary at Yirrkala. The great squalls cleansed and purified everything on the bungul ground. Gaypalani, one of the senior Gälpu song leaders was headed home to Galiwinku in his boat. I was worried about his safety. ‘Don’t worry’ he said as he headed off in his tiny vessel, round the perilous Cape Wilberforce. “The heat and tension of the three weeks of bunguldjäma will be dissolved in the squalls of rain’. He had been looking forward to it. Wititj had come to pay homage, to purify and cleanse and re-energise all those who have given everything they had to honor the great man. All this is normal and to be expected in the Yolŋu world, nothing is out of the ordinary. ‘Wititj is as real as you or I’

III

DjWG's father, Monyu Gurruwiwi, lived in the twilight period between contemporary balanda and traditional Yolŋu society. With eight wives: four Gumatj, two Warramirri and two Dhalwaŋu, Monyu was a powerful leader with a strong knowledge of Yolŋu rom across all of the different clans and malas. DjWG's mother was Djikulu Yunupingu making Gumatj, DjWG's mother clan group. Monyu, who passed away in the late 1970s, was born in the era when hundreds of men would fight and die in inter clan wars. The establishment of Christian missions in the 1920s and 1930s did not necessarily calm these wars. The early anthropological interpretation was that kindred clans within the same moiety fought over the right to wives. Hundreds of eligible bachelors needed to be sacrificed to make polygyny work, tough times to be a young man. (Warner) We know that inter-clan massacres occurred into the 1950s probably all unknown to the wider society. (Ross) Monyu clearly was a powerful warrior in this context and he prepared his sons to be equally able.

Monyu was John Cawte's friend and collaborator at Galiwin'ku over many years and he helped Cawte write his book *Healers of Arnhem Land* (Cawte). He called Monyu "Wattle Tree" because of the big wattle tree that grew near his house at Galiwin'ku . "I never knew a Yolŋu patriarch with so many wives, or better room service, than the august Wattle Tree". (Cawte, p. 89) We also have Ian Dunlop's footage of Monyu and Roy Marika at Yirrkala in the film "Dandi-wuy's House Opening" made in 1974. (Dunlop et al.) Dunlop's film gives us an insight into the relationship between these two leaders and clues as to the protracted dispute over land rights around Nhulunbuy and the now Rio Tinto bauxite mine.

Monyu helped John Cawte stage several photographs and films of traditional healing as well as black magic rituals. (Cawte, p. 9) It is no accident that Monyu's son DjWG plays

the role of the feared galka/raggalk. Wulum___, as DjWG was then known, can be seen creating sickness, spearing patches of urine on the ground, being pursued and finally killed by a clan group. The film and the stills of the book shows the athletic DjWG in the 1970s, not just a fearsome sight as an actor, but in real life as well.

Cawte also describes an incident in 1977 when Monyu and fourteen other men were rushed to Gove Hospital from Yirrkala suffering ciguatera poisoning.(Cawte, pp. 88-95) Cawte writes: "Wattle Tree and every other Yolŋu were clear that the disease arrived in the region only after the mining company's chemical works started up, and is only found in its vicinity. They had to find a name for it, gunampi... a sickness from coral fish guya garrung who are living on dead coral, rakung garrung. They believe that poison from the chemical plant runs into the sea and kills the coral on the nearest island, Bremer Island, and its reefs... They drew a map of their gunampi waters, where the coral is dying.." (Cawte, p. 92)

The ciguatera poisoning was the ultimate symbol that protectionism of Aboriginal society and culture through separatism, which had long been a forlorn goal of enlightened Aboriginal supporters from Donald Thomson to Ann and Edgar Wells and Cecil Cook, and prayed for by every major Yolŋu leader of the 20th century, was violated and impossible to recover. Now even the tiniest of fish and sea creatures were infected. There could be no place of home land of enlightenment and peace here. The invaders would have to be faced.

The map Cawte (opposite page) refers to, drawn up by Monyu, David Burrumarra and Wandjuk Marika, tells us something about the sense of ownership and knowledge of the whole area around the bauxite mine. Cawte quietly backs the conclusions of the Yolŋu leaders. He cites evidence by the World Health Organisation that supports their views about the links from mining pollution to dead coral and



CIGUATERA (GUNAMPI) POISONING WATERS

BY MOYNYU, BURRUMARRA, WANDJUK MARIKA

ciguatera/gunampi. (Cawte, p. 95) I think this also gives us a clue as to the views of Monyu and Burrumarra about staying in the region. In deep echoes of Djukan Gorge none of these issues have ever been adequately addressed.

The Dunlop film “Dandiwuy’s House Opening” (Dunlop et al.) also shows the close relationship between Roy Marika and Monyu. Monyu, at Roy Marika’s invitation, manages the purification of Dandiwuy Wanambi’s house invoking thunder and cyclones that destroy the stringybark forest and wipe away any lurking bad spirits. It is my theory that Monyu left the Gälpu estates around Nhulunbuy in Roy Marika’s hands as a guardian and caretaker. He then moved to Galiwin’ku to escape the poisoned gunampi waters, particularly given that the Gälpu lands round Galapa /East Woody, Dhambaliya/ Bremer Island, the town lagoon and certain areas near the refinery were closest to the site of the gunampi poisoning. It was of course these lands that DjWG would later come back to reside in and claim as Gälpu estates. These important facts were consistently overlooked in a series of land inquiries.

It was believed that the enlightened post-Milirrpum v Nabalco Northern Territory Land Rights Act would balm the wound of denying the Yolŋu cosmos with money, royalties and the false assumption that all this could never happen again. But the wound of bauxite mining and processing would never heal and the forty plus clans of the North East Arnhem land could never be properly compensated or even envisioned as joint custodians of thousands of sacred sites and landed regions that we call North East Arnhem land. It was just that Australia has been so shockingly bad at recognizing Aboriginal rights that any of this was ok.

The ritual that Monyu and Roy Marika led at Dandiwuy Marika’s house needs to occur at the now decommissioned, defunct rusting mass of metal that is the Nhulunbuy bauxite refinery, not just symbolically but physically: the toxins of 60 years of bauxite processing are stored in the mud ponds



that are eerily higher than sea level, above the Gunyangara and Birritjimi communities sitting like a time bomb waiting for a cyclone, as Rio Tinto sucks out every last skerrick of bauxite on the long conveyor belt that runs 24 hours a day to waiting ships. To have the toxins taken away, rehabilitated and the coastal areas returned to some form of their prior cultural and natural environmental health will be an enormous, nigh impossible task.

Monyu, Burrumarra and Wandjuk's voices were buried, if only for the yidaki man that could heal the world, and other family members who risked ostracism for speaking out amongst even their own countrymen. For despite all the peace and love that exuded from him and his sister, there was also this world weary and constant ongoing conflict of feeling: no-body quite understood 'the monster' at the doorstep, or, if they did, they had to remain silent and go with the views of the lawyers and former mining bosses who now became mini czars and advocates at great personal advantage.

There can be no criticism of the valiant Yolŋu leaders who from the bark petition to Ray Marika, M. Yunipingu, G. Djerrkurra, W. Laynhapuy, Galarrwuy Yunupingu had to work within a legal system that could never do justice to the traditional customary law, the rom of the Yolŋu world. The hope for the coming generations is that the two systems of laws might come much closer together. DjWG and his sister were shining stars for this course of action in the future.

IV

“Gurrutu, kinship, binds Yolŋu together with each other and the world. It is the pattern, the string, the raki, that binds us. It is so important to understand gurrutu, to understand song spirals and what they mean. Gurrutu is a fundamental mathematics, Yolŋu mathematics - a structure, a pattern - that places us in a network of relationship, of obligation and of care. It is our map. Through gurrutu we know how we are related. It makes the Yolŋu world. We are related as mother and daughter, as sister and aunty, as father, brother, great-uncle. This gurrutu is not only a blood relationship, but a place in a pattern of existence, a system of relationships. Gurrutu holds all to do with human beings, nature, land, sea, seasons. When it is really hot, people will say that is my waku-pulu, my child. When we see rain from the west, we know that is gurrutu, that is part of the pattern. We have many mothers, all of our birth mother’s sisters. It cycles through the generations, everyone fits, also ṇāpaki if they are adopted, looping to infinity and back, so that our great-granddaughter is our mother. That little girl could be a mother for you. This is fundamental to our beliefs.” (Gay!Wu Group of Women et al., pp. 81-82)

In 2015 DSG spent some days in Kangaroo Valley compiling a rudimentary family tree dimension (as below) of the Gurruwiwi gurrutu based around Djikulu and Monyu and his other wives. There were many grandfathers, aunties, uncles to be added not to mention lands, clouds, animals and other patrilineal and matrilineal relationships. These were break times as much as work times. Both DSG and Mrs. P.B. Burrarwaja enjoyed a holiday in the cold country where they could curl up by the fireplace and where DSG would watch endless episodes of NCIS. Both, like many Yolŋu elders of their generation were always in demand at home and gave everything to their families – they needed a rest at times. DSG had almost instant recall of family names and people. DSG had also, as Wesley Laynapuy’s major advisor

and wife, one might better say, political partner and equal, learned to live and work across worlds. But it might take weeks to even compile the names of family members in just the first few layers of the family tree. The task of gurrutu is beyond words and writing, it is a lived process, a life-long task of friendship and meetings, bunjul, painting, walking the lands and learning. Now as the Yolŋu population grows it will be quite a task, even for those with innate Yolŋu systems mathematics in their dna, to keep track of their kin. The Burrarwaŋa family had also started to map their family based around the prodigious Gatirri. For all of the Yolŋu ma-las this is an ongoing project and challenge. Thankfully the Gay'wu Group of Women have taken us now to another level in conceptualizing and thinking about these intricate tasks. (Gay'Wu Group of Women et al., p. 294) During the coming together at DjWG's bāpurru the task of writing down the spirals of family relationships that are ever in the minds of the older generations seemed important. Yapa hands on this task to her grandchildren for their children.

Monyu Gurruwiwi, Bapa, Galpu (Dhuwa)
 Djikulu Yunupinŋ Nandi, Gumatj (Yirritja)
 DS Gurruwiwi' ♀

Minirrnga Gurruwiwi ♀
 Miŋi Gurruwiwi ♂
 Balirrpalirr Gurruwiwi ♂
 DjW Gurruwiwi ♂

Datyalan Yunupinŋ, Nandi, Gumatj (Yirritja)
 Buwatjiku Gurruwiwi ♂
 Naykalan Gurruwiwi ♀
 Djawirr Gurruwiwi ♂

Bakutju Yunupinŋ, Nandi, Gumatj (Yirritja)
 Nyiwula Gurruwiwi ♀
 Luŋurra Gurruwiwi ♀

Wanydji Gurruwiwi ♂

Mipururr Gurruwiwi ♀

Djituna Yunupingu, Nandi, Gumatj (Yirritja)

Gurritjiri (Alfred)Gurruwiwi ♂

Ganyinurru Gurruwiwi ♀

Garrimu Gurruwiwi ♂

Muykumaŋ Gurruwiwi ♀

Rruwayi Bukulatjpi, Nandi, Waramiri, (Yirritja)

Dhathanu Gurruwiwi ♂

Warrayak Gurruwiwi ♀

Ranhdhakupuy Gurruwiwi ♂

Gaypadi Gurruwiwi ♂

Badikupa Gurruwiwi ♂

Warru Yunupingu, Nandi, Gumatj (Yirritja)

Marrŋanuin Gurruwiwi ♀

Wandjuk (#2) Gurruwiwi ♂

Warinyara Gurruwiwi ♀

Lakarriny Gurtuwiwi ♂

Rarrumarra Gurruwiwi ♂

Binyural Wananmurra, Nandi, Dhalwanu (Yirritja)

Gawurrmuna Gurruwiwi ♀

Gunbirrwala Gurruwiwi ♂

Baŋimi Gurruwiwi ♂

Nunukuwuy Gurruwiwi ♀

Bathalwuy Gurruwiwi ♀

Buyaŋirr Gurruwiwi ♀

Dhalŋanda Gurruwiwi ♂

Minji's gäthu

Wumbi Gurruwiwi ♂
Guywanga Gurruwiwi ♀
Bundjatji Gurruwiwi ♂
Djamina Gurruwiwi ♂)
Guwanbal Gurruwiwi ♂
Mawurryambatj Gurruwiwi ♀
Mapuruma Gurruwiwi ♀
Wanyilinyilil Gurruwiwi ♀
Manybarr Gurruwiwi ♀
Bekuruwuy Gurruwiwi ♂
Dhawutjputj Gurruwiwi ♂
Mayalpum Gurruwiwi ♀

DjW Gurruwiwi & Dopiya Yunupingu's gäthu
Wini Wini Larritjanja Gurruwiwi ♂
Zelma Gurruwiwi ♀
Zelda Gurruwiwi ♀
Lena Gurruwiwi ♀
Vernon Gurruwiwi ♂ *

DSG & Wesley Laynhapuy Dhurrkay's gäthu
Gary Dhurrkay *
Gabby Dhurrkay ♀
Lisa Dhurrkay ♀
Wesley Dhurrkay ♂

Gi'kal

Murupala Gurruwiwi/Gabaladhana Yunupingu
John Madjuwi Gurruwiwi/P.B. Burarrwanja's gäthu
Joyce Bunburrawuy Gurruwiwi
Terence Gaypalani Gurruwiwi
Tony Monyu Gurruwiwi
David Balawarr Gurruwiwi *
To be continued...

V

“And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?
Acts 9:6

“And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.”
Acts, 19:11

The English Bible, King James Version, The New Testament and the Apocrypha

The Christian church and its apostles were unmercifully persecuted and so, in the name of Jesus, persecution was wrought on others. In Australia, when it saved Aboriginal communities from the worst barbaric excesses of the colonists, the Churches of all denominations were also responsible for unforgiveable crimes. In Arnhem land, in the beginning at Roper River, Anglicans saved Aboriginal children from murder but were determined in Donald Thomson's words to 'stamp out native culture'. (Watson, 2022, p. 86) So it was at Maloga where Daniel Matthews 'wore the knees off britches' of those who he saved and he suppressed the energy of young men wanting to move to an equal playing field of competition in work or sport . (Botsman, Briggs, & Institute, 2022) The Lutherans at Cape Bedford and Hope Valley through Mooney's linguistic prowess saved language but similarly 'stamped out culture'. (Pearson) In North East Arnhem land at Millingimbi, Galiwinku and Yirrkala the Methodist Church was more enlightened. Wilbur Chaseling, the founder at Yirrkala, was determined to maintain many 'fine customs and beliefs' in 'every possible way'. (Watson, 2022, p. 93) Harold and Ella Shepherdson at Galiwinku were, without doubt, heros who helped Aboriginal elders such as Gatirri Burarrwanga at Mata Mata, and many others, create the beginnings of what was seen as the homeland movement as a means to preserve traditional culture. (Ross, 2019) Without Edgar and Ann Wells at Yirrkala the bark petition might never have been painted and submitted to Federal

Parliament (Wells, 1982) At Yirrkala and Galiwinku these individual Methodist missionaries were not without fault but they supported Yolŋu language and culture and appropriately earned respect and acknowledgement. ‘Balanda had capacity and ceremony’. Into this context we insert the evolution of Monyu and DjWG’s philosophy. Garraay too became an ancestral figure to respect and acknowledge.

DjWG’s generosity of spirit was often observed by visitors but there was some kind of transformative energy in him that came from more than just kindness. He had an effect of comfort and love on everyone who met him. “When you enter the room the bad spirits fly away” he told a loyal family friend.² This was typical of his spirit and words of encouragement to others.³

But this was not always his way, and in this paradox lies something of his power and also the transformation of the world of Monyu to the world in which DjWG and his family travelled the world as healers, diplomats and messengers.

DjWG’s yapa hinted to me once that he had killed men in the Yolŋu wars. Nothing is written down about this time and it was only hinted. It can be imagined. You have to look at the earlier warfare doctrines of A Black Civilisation and think about some of the observations of Donald Thomson. Or you have to consider Remaking the Pathway (Ross) that documents a modern day case of Yolŋu/Yolŋu war. Even today there are parts of Arnhem land where ritual punishment and even death still take place beyond the eyes of the mainstream world. In some ways this is a measure of the distance between the modern Australian world and the continuing world of traditional culture which has a whole dimension that is hardly known or explored. This might be seen as ignorance and the sheer cultural difference of the worlds. Whatever the case, the contemporary world’s inability to see beyond a certain mind set may well be an indication that Yolŋu leaders like DjWG have done a better job of integrating our world than vice versa.

Cawte’s photographs capture DjWG as a formidable warrior and show Monyu himself in a very feared role of identifying black magic practices and ‘invoking the bone’.. I will not reproduce these images here out of respect for Yolŋu cultural

practices. But they show something of the formidable warrior DjWG was known to be as a young man. He plays the role of the much- feared galka, stalking his victims, issuing curses, talking to birds and animals and being hunted and finally killed by angry Yolŋu warriors. The portrayal of dreaded “black magic” organized by Monyu is perhaps the most graphic and realistic of any on record. (Cawte)

John Blacket’s **Fire in the Outback**, the story of the 1979 Christian revival on Galiwinku/Elcho Island, has a formal reference to a story told at DjWG’s funeral by Geoffrey Dhurrkay. Blacket gives us one version of the story of DjWG and his wife Dopiya, and of how the notorious warrior was changed forever by his love for her.

Blacket wrote “I had held Dopiya as a young girl of fourteen crying in my arms when W, the son of a very powerful ceremonial leader on Elcho Island, had sailed across to Yirrkala in anger and in fury to claim his promised wife, who was this fourteen-year old school girl.. the store was locked and people had taken refuge inside the store. The pay office was locked and half the European people were taking refuge inside the pay office. W.. was screaming around with his spears, demanding his woman to take her back to Elcho. ... At sixteen, Dopiya did go to Elcho to become W’s wife. She was a Christian and she loved him and she prayed for him. But he was such an angry and dangerous young man – and such an important young man ceremonially because of his family – that when he walked up to the hospital dispensary, which he needed to do regularly, because he had very bad eyes.. you could see the people shift back. The Aboriginal people at the dispensary would move back without a word so that he went straight in. He was treated very carefully lest anybody ruffle him. So he walked the island like a king. All the time, this young Christian wife prayed for him. And so, fifteen years later, it was a great privilege before the Lord to see that man come and kneel at the cross and give his life to Jesus.” (Blacket, pp. 139-140) [2] Geoffrey Dhurrkay added that DjWG not only arrived at Yirrkala with his spears but also a shot gun strapped to his leg. The boom of the shot gun sent everyone cowering. (Personal Communications, Yirrkala, 2022)

2 Special thanks to Geoffrey Dhurrkay for this reference.

Is it possible to reconcile the loving, kind welcoming DjWG with the portrait in Cawte's book of the feared galka? Certainly the Cawte pictures are just an enactment. But DjWG's personal transformation is part of the 40 plus year love story between DjWG and Dopiya and it is also a story of what McIntosh has called "the task of building a pan-Yolŋu community in a Christian world—one in which **they** would be integral players." (emphasis added) (McIntosh, 2004) Gali Gurruwiwi, one of DjWG's uncles was also an influential member of this movement who reconciled the Banumb-irr morning star tradition with Christianity. In this light too DjWG transformed his traditional power and knowledge into a new philosophy of love and fellowship in which Yolŋu cultural practices would be respected and reach hitherto unknown audiences and cultures.

Black magic and wicked ways though was always around, and continues to be around in the minds of all Yolŋu. Even after his transformation, DjWG the warrior made some appearances. At a football game in 2012 when Baywarra the Gälpu team was playing at Yirrkala there was an incident or a disagreement with an umpire. Larritjana must have either bumped or admonished the umpire. DjWG and Vernon Gurruwiwi ran onto the ground and must have also bumped the umpire. The three of them were banned for ten years. DjWG told me that a witch had bewitched the umpire and they were knocking him to get the bad majic out of him. It took a long time for these bans to be lifted and this was a sorry period for the family who love their team and their football games. Eventually the family was forgiven, DjWG, Larritjana and Vernon more than attoned for these indiscretions and football remains a passion. In 2017 DjWG and his family adopted Port Adelaide and vice versa, the relationship was featured prominently in the South Australian Museum's exhibition **Yidaki: Didgeridu and the Sound of Australia**, 3 March – 16 July, 2017. (Jenkins, 2017, July) Larritjanna and Vernon continue to play with their beloved Baywarra football team in the Gove AFL.

Dopiya's role in transforming DjWG cannot be underestimated. Dopiya is one of the 'powerful seven' Yunupingu sisters. (B. Yunupingu et al., 2012) Her father was Munggurawuy Yunupingu and her mother was Yamayi Marika, two highly significant people with great cultural knowledge and influence. Dopiya encouraged DjWG to immerse himself into a greater knowledge of Christian traditions and songs. With Dopiya, DjWG completed studies in theology at Nungalinya College in 1994 in Darwin. He Dopiya and his family stayed there for two years and DjWG drove the college bus. (Personal Communications, Yirrkala, 2022)

Behind Dopiya and DjWG's personal transformation was a series of innovations and "adjustments" in Yolŋu culture and society that go back to the incursions of the Sama-Bajau, trepang-gathering Macassans from the 1700s. This was the era of the Murrnginy – people of the iron age – when smelting metal was taught to the Yolŋu and swords entered into Yolŋu ceremony. During this period the organizing icons of birrindyjji and bayini pointed to an era of prosperity and successful collaboration with outsiders. There are many ceremonial stories to be recovered and understood here. Stories of dogs and mosquitoes, of trading and conflict abound and remain a task for Yolŋu historians of the future to decipher following the work of Burrumarra, Ian McIntosh and others. (McIntosh, 2004)

The most significant contemporary event in Christian/yolŋu reconciliation occurred in August 1957. The church yard at Galiwinku became a venue for "a stunning collection of carved and painted wooded ranga representing the Dreamings (Wangar) of every north-east Arnhem clan. One ranga was enjoined with a Christian cross signalling the shift in status of Dreaming entities from all powerful mythological beings to prophets". (McIntosh, 2004) This signified an adjustment of Yolŋu culture and a coming together of the teachings of the Mission and Yolŋu rom. It is a matter of interpretation whether one sees Yolŋu culture adopting Christian culture or vice versa. (Berndt, 1962)

Dopiya and DjWG were also part of the evangelical revival that succeeded this 'adjustment; and began on Elcho Island/Galiwinku in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Aboriginal communities across Northern and Central Australia were linked

by a ‘fire’ of Christianity. (Blacket, 2009) None of this meant a dilution of DjWG’s Gälpu power and knowledge. The Christian fellowship added momentum to DjWG’s life and work. It took the yidaki from the backbone of Yolŋu manikay and ceremonial life to ‘trumpet of God’ whose healing qualities and other worldly capacities came to be respected. The evangelicals were wise in recognizing that the fire they were spreading attained an extra gurtha dimension by including and supporting Yolŋu emissaries. (See also Watson, 2022, pp. 161-162)

DjWG’s conversion to Christian theology transformed his traditional knowledge. There are some big stories to tell here. I suspect it will take many years for them to fully emerge. However part of what had happened even before the arrival of the evangelicals was that DjWG had become a house carpenter at Galiwin’ku . He had absorbed Papa Sheppy’s philosophy of “no work no food” it wasn’t too far different from the traditional dimensions of Yolŋu life. If you didn’t hunt, if you didn’t work then nobody could carry you. You had to make a contribution to the whole.

The early years of the yidaki enterprise were about DjWG selling arts and crafts to supplement their income and to support his family. It was a modest, honest enterprise. This work ethic was very clearly articulated over many years. They did not want or expect or agree with “sit down money” but DjWG was also fiercely protective over the quality of his work. He would be disappointed if people did not value his products and I recall several occasions where carpet baggers exploited the labour of the family by offering very cheap prices for yidakis at times when money was needed.

After Monyu returned to Galiwinku the Gälpu clan received none of the royalties that poured into the Ski Beach and Yirrkala communities each year and DjWG insisted that his family have a business ‘in the real world’. They sold yidakis at first for as little as \$100 but the prices soon rose as more people appreciated the fact that these were the Stradivarius violins of the yidaki world. But they are still, in my opinion, undervalued and this created as Randin Graves has observed a poor business strategy in which the focus became quantity not quality. Many in the market for yidakis did not appreciate them for their musical, let alone their other qualities.

DjWG

The family still work very hard for their income and sell yidakis and perform cultural welcomes for hundreds of visitors to Nhulunbuy each year.

When Gilbert and Tobin sponsored DjwG to come to Sydney in 2011 I calculated that DjWG was supporting about 50 family members and possibly more. At the heart of the enterprise was the extraordinary Dopiya and DjWG's sons Larritjaŋa, Vernon and grandson Yotjin and daughters Zelda, Zelma, Lena and his beloved yapa. They never stopped their djäma. It defined them. To live comfortably there needed to be the capacity to earn at least a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year to support the extended family and there needed to be a very highly managed flow of sales and distribution of yidaki nationally and internationally. There just wasn't this capacity though it is remarkable to see the level of enterprise that occurred then and now. Without any business support it just continued in the best way that was possible. (More on this later). There was magic and wisdom that came from this honest industry, something akin to a holy family that worked at a higher level than just money. These were the beginnings.

VI

"Who taught me? My two fathers, I watched them cutting yidaki in the bush like this...My father knows. When he goes hunting he brings yidaki with him; when he is hunting for turtle he plays the yidaki ...I make yidaki because my father, Monyu, knew about yidaki ...he taught me like this, here's a yidaki , here and here, you cut this one.." DjWG, 2009

Why would anyone take a six foot plus, cumbersome hollow log hunting - in the bush - or in a dug out canoe - or even a tinny? It makes no sense to us. It was not for entertainment. Only if you walk and hunt with Yolŋu men and women do you understand. If we Europeans are fishing we might for luck call on the fish to bite: "Come on fish bite". Make no mistake, Yolŋu men and women speak directly to the baru or guku or ŋäŋ'ka-bakarra or miyapunu and to the land itself. This is not a curious or lucky talisman. They call directly and are lead, ignored or go unheard - as the case may be. More often than not there is a response. The same is true when searching for yidaki in the stringy bark forest. The call goes out and the answer invariably comes. Tap, tap, tap.. hear the termite dust, hear the vibration.. Key of D, F, A.. liver, heart, brain.

So what does the yidaki do? It creates a vibration and allows all of the extraneous sensory dimensions of the world to move into the background. It is the vibration of the earth itself, the earth turning and the primal essence of things. Even in the jews harp like sounds of 'the strange didgeridu players from overseas' DjWG could hear something in their attempts to play the land. He welcomed it as a step in the right direction and was always encouraging. I think this is why there is so much of a superficial spirituality attached to the didgeridu even when the players had no idea of its Yolŋu or Aboriginal origins. There is something in the circular breathing, the tone and vibration that is deep and essential. Even in the artificially shaped didgeridus, the pvc pipes and vacuum cleaner tubes.. primal sounds could be faintly heard. DjWG was impressed that there was this dimension of European life that had a quest for this type of knowledge.

The yidaki's role in the manikay deeply ties in the words, rhythms and time of the bilma sticks and the dance. The great dancers closely listen to and follow the yidaki. It creates and maybe it opens the door to other dimensions and essences. It takes a lifetime to speak fluently with and hear the land talk back. The yidaki is our way of cheating a little to really hear and feel a little of what it means to walk in this other dimension of communications. And for DjWG perhaps it allowed him to travel ever more deeply into these mysterious dimensions of time and space.

In the early dawn as the sun comes up does not one hear in the profound quiet a yidaki like sound from the far horizon? The secrets of how the different yidaki's tune into these different aspects of time and space are known only to the Yolŋu masters. An opening to learn of these things is what the Gurruwiwi family offered so generously to the world. As DjWG said "Yidaki I can see"

VII

“Ga belanj nhuma njaru maka-nupan, yolŋu banha naya yaka bitjan gam’ “gululu go banham maka-nupandaj” Dhanju bayma Australia ga be bala raypa budapthun overseas. Njay’ nhumalingum, yidaki munhdhurr, bitjan munhdhurr dhuka-boyan waripuwu. Manymak. Bili warrpam npakiwura gali’ŋa munhdhurrmin. Ga yolŋu gali’ŋa munhdhurr. Yapay, bilanya nhan yulŋum.

Ga banhayam Intjun, banha naya yaka bitjana, “Gululu, go go, ŋ ayaknwarra nalanuramu.” Bewali, bewala budap. Barrkunuru, ga gobay njanjan dhambal nyiniyan. Yow, ga go nyelim njanjan.

Warrpam goŋ-munhdhurrmin, buku-liw’yuman. Dhanju npakim warra bayatj waripum dhŋruk. Njaru wangany nalma dhanju yulŋum. Wangany.

Njaru dhanju nanapu dŋma banha njaru bitjana gam’ dhanju djalkthuwan ga dhanju, njaru dhuka yunaguman. Njaru npaki warra gulŋiya. Yow, manymak.”

“To all of you who want to come to my land to learn, I say, “welcome, come to my land.” From here in Australia and from overseas. Here, the didjeridu is a gift for all of you, a gift making the way for you. Okay. Because everyone on the non-Aboriginal side has gifts. And on the Yolŋu side, there’s gifts. See, it’s like that.

And that’s beautiful. I say, “Welcome, come, come, from anywhere.” From there, from across the seas. From far away, come and sit here. Yes, all of you come.

Everyone has gifts, all around. It doesn’t matter that non-Aboriginals have different languages. Because we are all one. One.

If we work this way, not wasting, we will make a new path. And non-Aboriginals will join with us. Yes, this is good.”

DjWG, (Graves) Yidaki Story

When he returned from Nungalinga College another episode of DjWG’s life began. In 1997, he took part in one of the most important exhibitions of Aboriginal art, the **Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story 1937-1997**. Staged at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, DjWG opened the exhibition with yidaki playing and he helped with the construction

of a sacred sand sculpture in the foyer of the exhibition space.

Two years later DjWG delivered the first Yidaki Masterclass at the inaugural Garma Festival in 1999. Yidaki Masterclasses continued at Garma in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. The legend of DjWG as an international “guru” began.

Randin Graves’ **Cultural Foundations of the Yidaki in North-east Arnhem Land** (June 2006) has documented this period as well as any non-Yolŋu person can and DjWG’s role was seminal. Graves brings the perspective of those who came to the yidaki/didgeridoo without any knowledge of Yolŋu or Aboriginal, or even, its Australian lineage. The international didgeridu trend began in the 1980s and accelerated in the 1990s without any real reference to Australia “Many seek a spirituality in the sound, while many others enjoy the fact that there are no set standards for musicianship on the didgeridu”. The concern was that many practitioners claimed links to Aboriginal spirituality with little or no contact or knowledge. This was underlined by the fact that 80 per cent of one of the largest US sellers of didgeridus and recordings “were by non-Aboriginal players doing contemporary rhythms, mostly accompanied by other instruments” (R. C. Graves, 2006, June, pp. 28-29)

DjWG recognized non-Aboriginal didgeridu players but he also played a decisive role in making a bridge to Yolŋu culture and he enhanced the philosophy and understanding of the yidaki. He was clearly the most important figure in the creation of a modern Northern Territory/Top End yidaki culture and manufacturing industry that continues to grow each year. This industry literally grew from the back verandah of the Gurruwiwi, and other like, Aboriginal households, to become of a size and status that every major airport and all of the major tourist destinations such as the Sydney Opera House now usually have didgeridus and yidakis for sale. The issue, as for many other things with Aboriginal heritage and ownership, is how can such an ‘industry’ be in tune with culture and law, how can rights be recognized, authenticity be verified and the appropriate revenue and copyright flow back in constructive ways to communities, families and individuals. This continues to be a major issue. One would have supposed, that like any other major modern industry, a

founding pioneer might be very well compensated, but this was never the case for DjWG in his lifetime.

DjWG's brilliant sister, Ms. S. D. Gurruwiwi, (SDG) was often the family spokesperson and she sought help to take the family yidaki business to another level. Yapa was an ambassador between worlds, the master of a dozen dialects, one of the authors of the Dhangu dictionary (now just published many years after her death) and her elegant copperplate English hand writing learned at Dupima and 1970s Kormilda College was perfect. She was one of that generation's marvellous Yolŋu women who dazzled all that knew them. At this time she was supporting the creation of an academy linked to the Clontarf Academy to commemorate her son Gary Dhurrkay, at that time, the only Yolŋu man who had broken through into the WAFL and then the AFL as a football star. Gary, who tragically died after coming home to help lead the community, remains an icon for all Yolŋu. [Gary Dhurrkay Academy](#) In 2008 Ms. Gurruwiwi made a pitch to create "a yidaki university" at the Galpu homeland of Gi'kal. It would emerge from the visits of dozens of didgeridu practitioners who paid their own way to come to Garma and to workshops that the family ran independently. If you play back her speech her grand qualities and the close bond she had with her brother are evident. [Yidaki University](#) If only there had been the foresight to make that comparatively small investment. But there was hushed laughter in the room when she asked for \$5 million for buildings and infrastructure and \$1 million for a transport hub and added "if that would be too much". There have been so many millions spent on so much that was inappropriate or ill conceived in NE Arnhem land since that time, it is tragic to remember the modesty and honesty of her proposal.

SDG passed away too early in 2016 and after her passing you had to feel your way into what DjWG was saying. After a while, profound thoughts came from his presence. But this early period of the "rripaŋu (thunder) yidaki " was remarkable for its excellence of translations and the patience and care of those around him. We will keep on going back to these recordings as they are masterpieces and exemplary for inter-cultural communications. Though he has been surrounded by dedicated friends and family from all around the world, the loss of yapa was an enormous cavern that could

never be properly filled, she was the greatest ambassador for her brother, her husband, her sons and daughters. She was irreplaceable.

DjWG's 2002 Garma statement is a document worth going back to read. It was written to help newcomers understand the heritage of the yidaki. (See "Yol Nayi Yiakimirrinydja Barrkuwuy?" Who is this Yidaki Player from Far Away? (Graves, 2006)) It belongs in a grand tradition. Yolŋu rom (law) never changes, however, since the trade with China via Makassar and back into the vicissitudes of North Australian time there have always been imports (tobacco, steel, fabric) adaptations, innovations and adoptions of new comers including the Christian religion.

DjWG did not follow the ordinary path of a Yolŋu ceremonial leader. Like Dr. M. Yunupingu, AC, Yothu Yindi and Mr. G. Yunupingu, he broke through to broad national and international audiences. He was, like these other Yolŋu men, a world figure. To many he was "Australia's only guru" (Daley) and he gave the world a deeper understanding of his culture through the yidaki. Through DjWG many came to understand that the yidaki was an instrument of healing, a vibratory understory of Yolŋu manikay capable of evoking ancestral beings, places, animals, winds, lightning, clouds and rain as well as an instrument with an infinite range of musical possibilities.⁴

DjWG, along with the late revered Yothu Yindi yidaki player, M. Mununggur, (Mununggurr, 2004) and with the assistance of a long line of associates including his sister, wife and family, Guan Lim, (Lim, Gurruwiwi, & Gurruwiwi) (Lim) Randin Graves (R. Graves), the renowned Buku Larngay Mulka Gallery and others, linked up a world yidaki movement. From what had previously been seen as a curiosity, a drone pipe or didgeridoo, DjWG and others elevated it to the point where it could become, with William Barton, an orchestral instrument, as well as a sacred icon. DjWG was invited to Japan, Germany, the USA, England, the Netherlands in the early 2000s. DjWG's son, Larrtjanja Gurruwiwi's famous yidaki break (L. Gurruwiwi) was much like Charlie Parker's famous alto saxophone break in **Night in Tunisia**. (Parker) It literally blew people's minds and took the instru-

ment to another level. Millions have watched Larrtjanja's youtube performances. In this respect DjWG truly fulfilled the mission his father, Monyu, gave to him when he handed the yidaki to DjWG and the clap sticks to his brother saying:^[1] "Yaka nhuma n̄arru badatjunma".^[2] ("You must not fail") Now the yidaki prowess of all of the Yolŋu clans is known, respected and heard.

Traditionally the yidaki or didgeridoo was not found south of the line between Cairns and Broome.⁵ Those who took up the instrument below the line do not have the deep heritage nor understand its role in ceremony. Those outside Australia who were drawn to it did so for a range of reasons including improvisation, curiosity about wind instruments and experimentation. Increasing numbers of world didgeridoo players recognised the yidaki mecca of the north of Australia for knowledge, instruction and understanding.

DjWG created the garma, the surface knowledge, with the true deep narra roots also available to the dedicated few. In this way DjWG was a highly esteemed and honourable Yolŋu man that revered and was true to his own world. After him and an array of artists and song men, Yolŋu culture is recognized as one of world history's most unique knowledge systems and cultures that requires dedicated study and respect. DjWG always said he was opening up the door for the world to learn. That he did.

The scope of DjWG's music, dance, art and song is unfathomable. He was an international musical phenomenon, his paintings appeared in many of the major national and international Yolŋu art exhibitions from the early 2000s, and he was an iconic performer at bunguls and festivals and like many 'old men' of his generation an encyclopedia of cultural knowledge, all locked in his mind and manifested in manikay and cultural performance.

DjWG and his sister gently pushed the boundaries of all worlds including their own. (Botsman) The yidaki instruction CDs they made are unique. Unlike the purely instructional CDs which focus only on technique (Mununggurr, 2004), for DjWG and his sister, the sound and the dhäwu and the techniques are intricately connected.

DjWG made his own road as he went, and sometimes he was frustrated with his own people, sometimes even his own clan. These tensions usually just dissolved and were part of the reality of living across different worlds. DjWG did very well to manage his own community and a sympathetic national and world audience and a spirituality that embraced him, from the counter-culture of Byron Bay to the more Buddhist asceticism of Japan and South East Asia. The stories spread well beyond those who had met him directly. There was something about DjWG that appealed to people from all corners of the world. People recognized something about him, his shiny sunglasses, white beard and long hair, and tall physique made him immediately iconic and recognizable. When he was dancing, no-one could take their eyes off him. He was mesmerizing.

He was humble. He never took things for himself. He always shared with his family anything that came to him. I remember him typically sleeping on the living room floor with all his family around him. As is the Yolŋu way, everything was shared, everything was done together, it was a collective consciousness that is barely understood in the contemporary world. In this mould any visitors were also generously brought into the family and everything material and even spiritual was shared with them. Of course the same was expected of the visitors and sometimes this was not well understood.

There are all sorts of reasons why Garma at Gulkula has become a national event but I think Dr. M. Yunupingu and DjWG were two who made Garma what it is.⁶ People say Bob Hawke had charisma, DjWG had something beyond this. He attracted people from many different cultures and linguistic backgrounds. Dr. M. was the same. No-one who met them ever forgot them. Everyone had an anecdote about meeting these great men.

In 1986, DjWG had become known as one of the expert yidaki craftsman behind the Yothu Yindi band. It was not just the instruments but the sound of the yidaki in the songs that began to intrigue people. DjWG began to accept invitations to travel and more and more people enquired about learning how to play the yidaki as well as how to make the instrument. DjWG sent an open invitation to the

world to come and learn and share knowledge. From this time hundreds of people began to travel to visit DjWG. His family would often have several tents of people from many different countries Japan, Germany, France and the USA living outside their houses. The visitors would help the family enterprise and learn about how to play and craft yidakis. Have no mistake it was tough and onerous on the visitors but all threw themselves into the work.

The yidaki master class became one of the central offerings of Garma and for several years there was a 'holy' contingent of yidaki obsessed participants who had travelled from the most surprising urbanised places: Berlin, Amsterdam, New York, London, Tokyo. Many would spend thousands of dollars in airfares to learn. I once wrote to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Melbourne singing DjWG's praises and asked: "which students in which courses would spend up to ten thousand dollars and then spend weeks and months living in tents, labouring in the bush and doing so with joy, all in a quest to learn?" It was remarkable!

Over time the numbers involved in DjWG's yidaki "master class" tapered off, there were large costs involved for people to travel as well as pay for Garma entry as well as pay DjWG and his family the little they asked for, directly. Garma also changed to be more of a public policy forum. Key figures such as Guan Lim and Randin Graves who had done an outstanding job in setting up and introducing DjWG and the yidaki to the world moved to create their own independent enterprises and lives. Nevertheless in the early 2000s DjWG continued to attract international "yidaki pilgrims". They would happily learn how to play with the master. It all happened underground through hundreds of internet forums and through the networks and entrepreneurship of Lim, Graves and a growing army of yidaki entrepreneurs and enthusiasts.

DjWG was better known than anybody and even if you didn't know of him before Garma, you did by the end. He was just iconic. From Byron Bay hippies to corporate heavies DjWG just had something that attracted them all. There was something messianic, an element of Garra/Jesu that overturned the money lenders tables. I remember once, at the end of Garma, he threw up thousands of dollars in the air,

letting the notes fall into the red dirt and he just walked off. Nothing was just about money.

The yidaki master classes evolved into healing sessions in which hundreds of people would line up to be healed by Djalu's yidaki . In 2011 DjWG and his family traveled to Sydney to bring blessings to Gilbert and Tobin and their significant work for Aboriginal communities across Australia. DjWG not only did this he sealed and blessed the whole city American Express building much to the delight of crowds in the foyer. Jack "Gulkula" Thompson, would, every year, amongst many others, be there for his yearly rejuvenation. DjWG would play the yidaki into each person's heart and it was as if it tuned into individuality. The yidaki would help DjWG to see into 'his patients' and he would describe how he had shifted this or that illness or turned something dark into light. "You are clear now" and then he would shake hands gently. No money necessary.

DjWG lightning strikes had affected his speech especially towards the end of his life. If you listen to DjWG's 2002 speech at Garma which thanks to Graves is still up online, his speech is very good and understandable. Nevertheless his sister was his greatest translator and interpreter. You can hear her gentle speech in his yidaki instruction CD (D Gurruwiwi) As he finished speaking, she also had almost finished her English translations. They were totally in tune. Her introductions to Sea, (marrpaṅ flatback turtle, milika diamond fish, wapurrar calm water, yinydjapana dolphin, djarrak crested turn, wapurrar gapu calm water, wuḍuku mangrove driftwood) Forest (gärrimala a sacred waterhole, gaḷkarrinḷu crow, guḍurrku brolga, bulunmiri a sacred rock, marurrumburr native cat, galmakpuy the same sacred water hole) and Wetlands (gurruṁaṭṭji magpie geese, wuṅgan dog, guḍurrku brolga) manikay are unmatched in terms of their clarity and beauty. They are the greatest ever introductions to Gälpu manikay and ceremony and I think are probably unparalleled across the board.

VIII

Ditjuma nyäku dhaṅu ṅayi
 Ṽalman ṅarru dhaṅu warwuyana
 Go! Yolṅuwarra bukmak
 Ṽalma djinaku wäṅa ṅayiwu ga waṅanharami
 Ṽalma ṅnarru latjumurru
 Dhukamurru ṅaykam bukmak yolṅu.

Give me back my landṭ
 We are worried
 and crying for it
 Come, everyone
 We'll talk together for this land
 so we can all have freedom,
 walk and be proud of it.

Larrtjanna Wini Wini Gurruwiwi, Yolṅu Crying for the Land

Beneath the spiritual dimensions of DjWG was a very real concern about the lands of NE Arnhem land and the world environment.

DjWG and his yapa can be seen on Wirriku in the 2014 film **In Between Songs** making an important statement about the disruption of Yolṅu lives by the bauxite mine at Nhulunbuy. Their sophisticated message was not only that the mine had destroyed the environment but that royalties were poisoning the Yolṅu people. It was this belief in the poison of passive money that really underscored the way the Gurruwiwi yidaki enterprises worked. When I asked in 2008 what was the dream for the “business”? The answer was, not wealth or money, but putting young people on to “the right path” and giving them direction in their lives.(D. S. Gurruwiwi, 2008)

DjWG steadfastly pushed for recognition of yolṅu rights by promoting greater cultural understanding in the spirit of Dr. M. Yunupinṅu but he was not adverse to working with the Northern Land Council and others to assert formal legal rights to home lands. His Gälpu mala, one of the most extensive of the North East Arnhem land clan groups, should

rightly see their traditional land rights recognized around the township of Nhulunbuy and the Bauxite Refinery. DjWG's paved the way for a wider recognition and more complete understanding of all of the Yolŋu malas rights and interests. (*Rirratjingu Parties v Gälpu Parties & Anor* (2019) NTSC 77 ongoing) He was not a black letter lawyer, nor did he favour them, but he persistently called into question the received wisdom of how Yolŋu rights were recognised. In this he followed a pathway set by his father Monyu who was one of those who, along with M. Yunupingu, W. Marika, D. Burru-marra that recognized the environmental destruction of the land and sea caused by the bauxite refinery.²

DjWG maintained that the idea of fixed boundaries of clan land was a balanda (european) mistake sometimes encouraged by those with an interest in an outcome. DjWG argued that from the rock off the Rainbow Cliffs near Yirrkala, to the Nhulunbuy lagoon and along the red mud ponds of the Gove Bauxite plant, a Gälpu ancestral being, and if I can remember correctly, a dog had walked. In this way the Dhuwa and Yirritja songlines merged. The idea that this defined one's right to have a house on, or own this songline land, was one of the things DjWG riled against. Things were more complicated than the balanda anthropologists and law courts imagined. DjWG and his sister saw that there was a fundamental sense of injustice at the way in which the whole mining enterprise and developments were managed. European law pushed away Yolŋu rom (law) and customary life.

Asserting his rights, DjWG and many families lived on the beach in tents at Galapa (East Woody) for a long time. His yapa, in her usual brilliant way, managed to diplomatically convey people who were visiting NE Arnhem there in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Visitors saw the injustice of the families living without electricity, power or water. DjWG was following a mission also set for him by Monyu. The family was back to live on their ancestral homes and lands. Even today in 2022 disconnected Gälpu family members live in tents at Middle Beach supported by charity workers. Others find solace 'living rough' on the land in other coves and hideaways near "the Monster". The sense of belonging and loss is palpable.

DjWG and his sister adopted many outsiders here. 'If we do

not adopt you, then you are just like the seaweed flowing in and out with the tide'. The mangrove creek was nearby and the hunting was relatively good but this was sea country that according to Monyu was poisoned and nearby were the comfortable executive houses of the bauxite mining industry, the Nhulunbuy Golf Club and the model town that had been planned and built. There could not have been a bigger contrast. The meaning of the loss of the Millipurru v Nabalco Court case in 1967 was never more apparent than at this time.

The establishment of NT Land Rights by the Whitlam government in October 1975, could not restore the injustice of losing this land, and most importantly, the cultural foundation and elegance of the case put forward by the 12 djungliers representing all of the Yolŋu clans, was also lost. From this time everything was reduced to an inglorious, and I could use stronger language, fight for royalty payments and token owners who might justify or at least exonerate the bauxite plunder. If the case presented by the bark petitioners had been accepted all of the Yolŋu clans would have been compensated and, most importantly, would have had to be part of all of the future negotiations about how the whole region developed. But here was DjWG and his family living in abject poverty with the midges and mosquitoes approximately five kilometres away from the huge bauxite plant that delivered hundreds of billions, perhaps trillions, in revenue to the company and to the wider Australian community.

A relatively small funnel of royalty payments was paid out to the Gumatj and Riratingu clans that might well be regarded more as a curse than a blessing.

DjWG eventually won the right to houses near the bauxite mine at Birritjimi. But, at the end of his life in 2022 Birritjimi had gone from manicured lawns to the beach in the early days of mining to a ghastly slum. After DjWG has been acclaimed in countries around the world and in the major museums and art galleries of Australia, he and the Gälpu families lived in rotten housing that has not been maintained and is full of asbestos. Currently the houses are being knocked down one by one and, as I write these words in 2022, no-one really knows what will happen next. The pic-

ture of poverty, dispossession and inequality could hardly be equalled anywhere in the world. If this was the Arab Emirates the Gälpu and the other Yolŋu clans would be wealthy beyond anyone's imaginations. It would be they who controlled who owned what and where. They would determine if people from other places could stay on the land. But in 2022 at the time of his funeral Birritjimi resembled a garbage tip not a home land.

Australians think of themselves as generous but the truth is there is a local, regional and national barrier of unconscious racism that diverts our attention from all this. We cannot conceive of the Yolŋu in the place of the original NABALCO and now Rio Tinto owners and managers. In Nhulunbuy, the model mining town, this is reinforced by a sometimes shocking prejudice and enmity, the tourism buses come in to see the Gälpu bungul to buy arts and crafts and to see the Northern Aborigines 'who have not lost their culture', living in the worst poverty that this country knows, in the shadow of the crumbling bauxite refinery. The irony is that it is the Gälpu, and all the other Yolŋu malas, who should be the multi-millionaires with not just royalties, but ownership and control of the mining company that has made billions since the 1960s. The best that can be done is for Rio Tinto to buy bauxite from tiny Gumatj and Rirratingu clan owned operations that are but a shadow of the mining operations that have taken place since the 1970s. ^{d 3 n} In fact, as the current case against Rio Tinto for destruction of the land attests, 'the Monster' would never have been built the way it was if the Yolŋu had their way, they would feel the land and the planet rather than the need for personal wealth. At the very least the environment would have been far better protected.

When DjWG and his family came to live in the shadow of "the Monster" the most toxic aspects of the processing of aluminium had ceased. But all the toxins that have been produced are still there and need to be rehabilitated. Now only the raw bauxite is exported. When he and his family moved back to Galapa it was as if again, DjWG was following the prophetic pathway and the instructions laid down

3 <https://aluminium.org.au/news/gove-purchases-bauxite-from-indigenous-owned-and-operated-mine/>

by his father. The feeling of all those who took place in his funeral was that justice would eventually prevail at least in part; in hindsight, so much environmental damage and degradation has occurred and the next wave of legal challenges to “the Monster”.(Cunningham, 2022, October 24) continues. But not in the law, not in government, not in the media and not even in the received understanding of Yolŋu paintings, songs and ceremonies is there a true knowledge of all this, but there was in DjWG something that gave everyone a small glimmer of understanding of the majesty of Yolŋu culture and its intimate relationship with land and sea.

DjWG’s painting in the famous Saltwater (*Saltwater: Yirrkalā bark paintings of sea country : recognising indigenous sea rights*) collection is very moving as we look back and appreciate his life and contribution to Australia and the world. It shows an astonishing knowledge. The painting depicts the different qualities of sea off his birth place Wirriku and most particularly the sacred rock at the bottom of the sea created by the ancestral thunder man Bol’nu. This rock is the origins of Gälpu lightning and his beloved sister was named after this rock. Her voice on the famous yidaki instructional CDs is imbued with the deep feeling of this place. The painting binds family, ancestral beings, deep manikay and the Gälpu knowledge of the sea. How was it known, this enormous rock tens of metres below the surface of the ocean? Was this knowledge, conveyed ceremony by ceremony, song by song from a time when the Australian land mass was still linked up to Timor, New Guinea and Indonesia? This question gives us a clue to how much the mainstream world is still yet to understand about the cultural treasures DjWG and his family have shared so generously and willingly.

IX

What was it that DjWG did in his healing practices?

Documentaries of the experience of pilgrims who came to see Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi talk of many individual experiences, he met people with his eyes and took them to his level of enlightenment. He helped people to make the transition from life to death. He took people to a level of transcendence beyond words. His chief lesson was to *dissolve the I* that is the basis for suffering and ignorance. I find this a useful comparison.

The recording of DjWG playing his yidaki into my heart are online. (Botsman, 2009, February 22) What happened to me? There was an immediate clarity of thought that was still with me years after his “healing”. After a while I couldn’t remember what it was to not have a sort of crystal clear feeling of life and mind.

He also told me that I had some inner connection with Yolngu that went back to my early childhood and he was able to recount and interpret experiences in my life that no-one could have known about except perhaps my mother and family. ‘My childhood companions who talked to me in the ti-tree forest were real’, he said. I was able to write a story called Kananook “Sweet Water” (Botsman, 2011, 8, 5 5 #5021) based on what he revealed back to me about what I had seen and felt as a child. When I showed him some pictures of my early childhood it confirmed to him that spirits were talking to me at this early age before all of the pollution of the modern world could interfere with my thoughts. He looked at a photograph my mother had taken of my pram as a baby and said.. ‘look at the ti-trees’ ‘there above your pram can you see the faces of the past warriors talking to you?’

All this was some kind of key to understanding the Aboriginal world. The vision was of a time before colonialism,

something like what Bill Gammage has brought home and Bruce Pascoe is now doing such a good job of revealing in his many books.(Gammage) (Pascoe) (Pascoe, 1982) (Pascoe, 2014) My childhood suburban home of Seaford/Kananook was, like many parts of Australia before colonialism, *the garden of Eden*, preserved for thousands of years by careful management and ceremony but completely hostile and foreign to European eyes. The Carrum Carrum lakes, which in their wisdom white settlers, turned into a sewerage farm and an inland canal estate, were places of unimaginable beauty. The Kananook creek which was a stinking sewer as I was growing up, was originally as its name implied, truly “sweet water” with fish and eel traps running behind the foreshore of Port Phillip Bay from Carrum down to what is now the Frankston Pier. It seemed a miracle to have sweet clear fresh water flowing parallel to the sea. The banks above the Kananook Creek had ancient paths and wondrous camp sites. The wind blowing in the ti-tree truly talked. The bitumen streets had an underlying essence and spirit still there for all who wanted to see beyond the concrete and glass and the mundanity of surburban life. There is still peace there despite all the damage and destruction we wrought.

When I came back to my farm in Kangaroo Valley I felt an ease and connection with the land that had not really existed and when the *biodynamic guru* Alex Podolinsky visited me, he knew too that there was something that DjWG had given to me that was beyond the soil and the gardens and even biodynamics. It was a spirit that he too wanted to learn more about at the end of his life and was only partially reflected in a recorded conversation we had that was unfinished as an edited transcript at the time of his death. (Botsman, 2006, May, 8 8 #5022)

All this is just rudimentary and comes as no surprise to Yolngu people, it is the basics, the surface and they are grateful and sometimes annoyed that balanda show some respect for their culture and skim the surface of their deep

knowledge. The true deepness comes from practicing manikay over collective life times. There is a transcendence in bungul djama in which people enter into another dimension which is free of the I, free of the ownership and proprietary dimensions of mainstream life and in which some kind of oneness occurs. The language of the land evolves from scary gurgles and mysterious sounds to a clear discussion. *The Yolngu are the tongue of the land.*

And is not the bāpurru itself a ceremony to ensure that the soul goes back to the essence of everything, saving what those who in Indian philosophy call reincarnation and endless suffering and an entrance to what Christians call heaven. All these things come to those who were blessed to meet DjWG and many other men and women of high degree within Aboriginal Australia.

Is all this not “a voice” that Australians and the world should hear and celebrate?

Prime Minister Albanese’s speech at 2022 Garma gave the most practical mechanism for how the Australian national constitution needs to be changed to recognize the Aboriginal people of Australia.(Graham) He suggested three sentences needed to be added to the Constitution of 1901 in which Aboriginal people were but part of the flora and fauna and had no human or civil rights:

“There shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to Parliament and the Executive Government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws with respect to the composition, functions, powers and procedures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.”

After all that has occurred could there be a more modest proposal? How could anyone be concerned that a successful outcome of such a referendum might be harmful or detrimental to the nation? It simply makes permanent forever

DjWG

a consultative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that may be changed by governments according to the will of all Australians through their elected representatives. How could there be any doubts?

It is not the detail that is now lacking, but the quality, feeling and character of this “voice”. One of the false assumptions is that “a voice” would be a place only to solve or air Aboriginal problems. DjWG was a living example of the tremendous contribution that Aboriginal elders can make to this nation and to the world.

Beyond all the rhetoric and discourses and speeches many people from all over the world came to simply sit with DjWG and to learn. The barriers came tumbling down. Most were ordinary people with no particular disposition towards Aboriginal people, yet he was recognized by them as a world figure, a guru if that is the appropriate word to describe his role. They knew he had something special, something to be respected, something they needed – he gave a feeling of peace or love or well being that you felt deep inside. No-one was excluded because he saw how we were all connected.

Ironically, this man, a national treasure lived in the midst of all the colonial and industrial contradictions of Gove, in close proximity to the equivalent of the Pittsburg steel mills in paradise, the monster. Here benediction came from a man and family who in so many ways, had been so badly treated.

When we think of “the voice” perhaps we should think of DjWG and elders from across the country. Their contribution is so overdue and so necessary for the development of the nation . With their involvement a voice would bequeath great wisdom and understanding for our nation. It comes after so much heartache and pain and misunderstanding from a people whose guidance will bring only good things to the country and the nation as well as themselves.

“A man who is a good dancer, who knows his connections and his lands and understands his rom (law and culture).. can act intelligently as an individual because he knows and respects the background to what he is doing. He is a unique individual. He isn’t just copying his ancestors. He isn’t just keeping Yolju culture unchanged like a museum piece. He has learned to create something that is especially his own, but quite consistent with the past.. He is a modern Yolju keeping his culture strong”
(Marika-Mununggiritj & Christie, 1995)

Who was DjWG? A streak of lightning across the sky. Visitors to Garma are often drawn to an extraordinary dancer during the nightly *buḷul*. The dancer seems to have subtle moves and may finish his dance with a finale that brings a roar of approval from the gathered Yolju families. It is a bit like that silent murmur of approval that comes unconsciously from a crowd watching the football at the MCG. In a culture where solidarity and asceticism is everything these individual performances can be inspiring and surprising. Thus was the enigma and mystery of DjWG. He trod a revolutionary road across his own culture and in the wider world,

DjWG’s family will continue their deep spiritual engagement with Christianity, Larritjana will continue to make world music in the same way that Dr. Yunupingu and Mr. G. Yunupingu have done, Vernon, Yotjin and others will continue to heal with the *yidaki* and the mighty *Gälpu* will continue their *manikay* as they have done for millenia. Let us pray it will be easier for them than it was for DjWG and his *yapa*; at the moment this is far from the case.

You would think that at some point a true *yidaki* ‘industry’ and a university might emerge that acknowledges its Aboriginal heritage with as much support from Territory and Federal governments as the mining industry has commanded. This is a minimal expectation as Australia moves past its

colonial baggage.

Whatever the case, and no matter how long it takes, no-one will forget DjWG and his tomb and monument at Yirrkala will continue to attract visitors for the years and decades to come. Even if the Australian nation did not understand or acknowledge him as well as they should have during his life, pilgrims will continue to come from the four corners of the earth. They will come to play their yidakis at his grave, to learn from his family, and to touch the essence of his philosophy and healing. His family will mourn him in the greatest traditions of the oldest continuing culture in the world. With all this many will discover other wonders of Yolŋu culture, the manifold dhäwus and heroes, the ancestral beings and the magic of the Miwatj lands – the land between sunrise and sunset.

Yolŋu people are always generous and encouraging: ‘just listen and write with your heart’ but that is not really good enough anymore. Apart from some pioneering studies, (Cawte, 1996) (Reid & Trompf, 1991) there just is not enough serious scholarship that takes the perspective that traditional healers have a great deal to contribute as equals in our contemporary society. For this man, it is not good enough to be a sympathetic advocate, writer or an academic citing anthropological sources. We must acknowledge how much we don’t know. There needs to be a new era of enquiry that provides teaching scholarships to the young and old Yolŋu masters.

Serious collaborative scholarship is emerging.(Gayl'Wu Group of Women et al.) In the horror of the rubbish dump housing of Birritjimi, where the great man and his family lived, like Mother Theresa in the slums of Calcutta; a million flowers will bloom and the Gälpu and all the Yolŋu malas will finally come to live in a good place between the old and the new worlds. As is already being talked about, ‘the Monster’ – the great crumbling rusting NABALCO/Rio Tinto aluminium smelter, will be replaced by a monument to Yolŋu culture

that is revered and respected far more than the hundreds of millions of tonnes of bauxite and aluminium that are now part of the cars, houses, skyscrapers across the wide world.

All this was heralded and foreseen by DjWG and his yidaki , his trumpet from God which drew its power from Jesu and all the ancestral beings of the Yolngu world.

For Australians who live on this continent, so brutally taken and traversed, true peace can only come from recognising Aboriginal culture as independent and sacred. After two hundred plus years of colonialism we are only beginning. There cannot be a selfish taking of knowledge. There must be a mutual giving back and an investment back into the sanctity of Aboriginal life without any requirement that this culture must look like the mainstream or conform with what we think is normal.

DjWG and his family show us the 'way in' to a deep understanding of the lands we call Australia, of secrets, charms and dangers. They give the gift of walking on this land with a new and deep feeling of belonging and love. "I am here for all" "Come let us learn together". Those who knew him might ask: 'Why did he and his family give so much for so little in return?' There was never a refusal to help and serve strangers, friends or family. We should remember all this as we authorize, support and envisage a voice to parliament for Aboriginal Australians, we need to be as generous and as kind as he and his family were to so many strangers.

This new voice in our history and in our society will bring to the fore not just people elected by a Western style vote for representatives, but elders who bring with them great wisdom, healing, love and transformative power like DjWG. Are these elders not truly representative of our ageless land's sovereignty? Far more so than, with the greatest respect, any King or Queen of England.

DjWG's faltering signature was the only time he would write. He was a man of high degree in Yolngu education but

barely educated in balanda terms. Yet his fame was surprising and unprecedented and his contribution was boundless. There was no-one like him. There are few who have crossed so many boundaries and are revered by so many different people from so many different countries and contexts. Was he a guru or a saint? He would simply say his knowledge is there for all. "Here for you. Here for you." The nation owes him a tremendous debt of gratitude. Thank you, thank you wāwa for all you have done for so many, for opening up the majesty of Yolŋu knowledge to the world and for introducing us to a new kind of spiritual enlightenment that transcends race, national boundaries and offers some form of salvation for the mainstream modern world.

XI

Follow the vibration.. across the land to Goulburn Island and back and now to the world.. from the yidaki of Yothu Yindi, to Dhalatnghu, to the angelic voice of G.G. Yunupingu to King Stingray and Baker Boy.. and the songs of Larritjana, slowly composing his masterpieces on the little keyboard at Birritjimi.. what causes the magic.. the serpent connecting to the negative in the earth and spitting lightning into the sky at a special place and appointed time.. creativity, invention, inspiration, joy.. that no-one knows but God... for who knows when the majic arises? but we know it when we see it .. Judea, Galilee, on the slave ships when in great adversity the vibration of deep soul Africa found something in the story of Garray, the Mississippi Delta, Studio One in Kingston Jamaica, the south side of Chicago, 'kung fu fighting' at a London house party, "on the outskirts of Frisco", the Saints and "the Curry shop" in Brisbane, Slim Dusty playing on a trailer in the mulga or the spinifex, the angels of Arnhem land singing on the beach^[4], hippies travel around trying to find energy sources, they are truly everywhere, if you drive in the great South land, there is an endless stream of magic flowing from North East Arnhem land.. painting, music, soul, mystery, magic.. sustained by the oldest ceremonies in the world.. here is a place and people to nurture, love, recognise and celebrate ..

"I got a home in-a that rock, dont you see?
I got a home in-a that rock, dont you see?
Between the earth and the sky,
Thought I heard my savior cry:
You got a home in-a that rock, dont you see?"^[5]

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4 Garray Dangu Nngya Nhunul Nrranan https://soundcloud.com/kangaroo/garray-dangu-nngya-nhunul-nrranan?si=119d13aca59f4fc4841734be70ea6f39&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

5 Poetic Reimaginings, The English Bible, King James Version, p.1340

XII Yolŋu Words and Phrases

Balanda- European

Burralku - land of departed spirits home of the morning star

Bäru - crocodile (generic) Salt-water Crocodile, *Crocodylus porosus*

Bhatalabungawa – big boss

Bilma – clap sticks

Ba^uumbirr - morning star

Bäpurru - group--ethnic, clan-nation, tribe, organisation Ext a death (in the family), funeral

Bungul – ceremony, rite, ritual celebration involving clap sticks, yidaki, song and dancing

Dhäwu – story

Dhuwa – patrilineal moiety

Djäma - work

Djärimi – sacred rainbow river, haunt of wititj that divides Mata Mata yirritja land from Gi'kal dhuwa land.

Djungayi – manager, lawyer, boss of ceremonies and land

Garma - ceremonial site--for circumcision, held in camp any open sacred ceremony, the name given to the annual exposition of Yolŋu traditional knowledge held at Gulkula in North East Arnhem land annually, an increasingly important event in the national Indigenous calendar.

Garray - lord, master Ext Jesus, God lovely, good

Guku – wild honey, native beehive, "sugarbag" honeybee

Gurruṯu– kinship system, clan and family relationship

Gurtha - fire (generic), log, firewood Ext matches, light(er)
bullet

Mala – clan or extended family

Miwatj – North East Arnhem Land – the land between sun
rise and sun set – the sun rises over the Gulf of Carpentaria
and sets over the Arafura sea

Miyapunu - turtle (generic), sea mammal (collective for du-
gong, dolphin, porpoise, or whale) meat, flesh (of these)

Nj̄n'ka-bakarra - tree--edible green fruit Billygoat Plum,
Green Plum, Terminalia ferdinandiana T. latipes, T. platypylla

Rom – Yolŋu law and customs

Wititj – olive python, liasis olivaeus, rainbow serpent

Wurruguluma – green backed turtle

Yapa - sister

Yidaki – didgeridoo

Yirritja – moiety, patrilineal

Yolŋu – the common word for “man” in the language and
dialects of North East Arnhem land, the word is used as a
means of grouping together the different clans of the re-
gion. (Schebeck & Dixon)

Wäwa - brother--elder

Source: Yolŋu Matha Dictionary, <https://yolngu.dictionaty.cdu.edu.au>



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Endnotes

¹ Will Stubbs is coordinator at the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Arts Centre in Yirrkala, NT, and a passionate advocate of Indigenous arts and Australia's unique arts centres. A former criminal lawyer, Will began working with Yol\u Elders and Artists, such as Djambawa Marawili AM, Gawirrin Gumana AO and Wanyubi Marika in 1995.

² Ali Wali, Eulogy, Yirrkala, Sep 18, 2022

³ As a bigger international audience got to know Djal\u, they saw not only a man possessed with spreading the message of the yi[aki - but also an incredibly generous and open-hearted human being.' <https://www.ididj.com.au/djal\u-gurruwiwi/>

⁴ William Barton came to the 2007 Garma yi[aki master class and there is a memorable photo of DjG dancing to the sound of 20 yi[akis including Barton.

⁵ "A common misconception is that the didjeridu has always been pan-Australian. It actually originates from a small area of the "Top End," bounded by Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and the northeastern Kimberleys in Western Australia, followed by Cape York in north Queensland" (R. C. Graves, 2006, June)

⁶ At his funeral the Gumatj family and corporation made a special acknowledgement of DjWG in recognition of the role he played in making the annual Garma festival a major national annual event.





