BUNDURRPUY
What Does Bundurr Mean?

Wapiriny Gurruwiwi

Transcribed by Garŋgulkpuy
Translated by Garŋgulkpuy and Michael Christie
23 September 2008

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Yo! Yothu ŋunhi ŋayi li dhawal-guyanjirrnydja dhunupan yan ŋunhi ŋayi bundurrrmirrnydja yothuny. Yo! Yothu ŋunhi ŋayi li dhawal-guyanjirrnydja ŋunhi ŋayi bundurrrmirrnydja Yothuny.

Bundurrrmirryirra ŋayi li, likanmirriyirra, ŋayi dhuwal garaka ŋayi, mulkurr ŋayi, dilţį ŋayi, mel ŋayi, marwat ŋayi, ŋunhi ŋayi bundurrrmirra warrpam‘nha.

Ŋunhi ġalapal nhawi malŋ’thuna ŋayi ŋunhi li yutjuwalany ŋunhi dhawal-guyanjirrnydja gal‘kalmirriyirr ga ġalapalyirr

Ga yalala ŋayi dhu bāyŋuthirr ŋunhi ŋayi still goŋmirr2 yän ɲe!

Goŋmirr yän ŋayi ŋunhiyiny ŋunhi dhu dhingamany ŋuruŋyi ŋayi goŋmirrnydja bundurryun, bundurryun likannha ŋayi.

Yol ŋayi diyial gan nhinan, wanhajur ŋayi, wanaŋ hanaŋ wäŋa, yol hanaŋ yap3, yol hanaŋ märi ga yol hanaŋ jändi‘mirriŋu…

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Free translation

Okay. When a child is born she already has sacred names for her bones. Yes, when the child is born it already has bundurr.

She is born with a sacred ‘knee’ name, and a sacred ‘elbow’ name, all related to her bones, her head, her back, her eyes, her hair, all of her has bundurr1.

Any adult we see, when she was small and newborn, and when she was crawling around, (she always had that same bundurr), and now she is old.

And later when she dies, she still has all those connections.

When she dies, she will be all connected, and it is the bundurr which makes those relationships, through the bundurr she has connections.

Who she was when she was alive with us, where she was from, where her country was, who her great great grandmother’s people were, her grandmother’s, her mother’s …

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1 Beginning to tease out the meaning of bundurr, Wapiriny is linking the knees and elbows (the most potent source of Yolŋu connectedness metaphor) with all the other parts of the body (each with its own spiritual significance).
Ngurunjiny ngayi nguli goŋmirrnydja, bēŋur ngayi yutjuwala goŋmirr bundurrmirra ngayi already, ŋunhi ngayi li malṯ'huŋa ŋunhi ngayi goŋmirr bundurrmirra ngayi ga bāyŋuthirr ngayi dhu, rakunydhirr ngayi dhu ŋunhi ngalapal, yurr rakunydhirra.

Ngayi dhu yothu ga goŋmirr yan ngayi even ngayi yothu bāyŋuthirr wanhal ngayi dhu aŋeŋur bāyŋuthirr napuŋga aw wulmandhirra ŋayi dhu still ngayi goŋmirr yan bili ŋunhi born goŋmirr ga bāyŋuthirr ngayi still goŋmirr yan.

That is how she is connected, since she was a small baby already with bundurr, as soon as she was born, she already had connections with bundurr, when she dies, when she’s old and dead.

Ngayi dhu yothu ga goŋmirr yan ngayi even ngayi yothu bāyŋuthirr wanhal ngayi dhu aŋeŋur bāyŋuthirr napuŋga aw wulmandhirra ŋayi dhu still ngayi goŋmirr yan bili ŋunhi born goŋmirr ga bāyŋuthirr ngayi still goŋmirr yan.

Ever since a baby, she has connections, it doesn’t matter how old she is when she dies, middle aged or old, she is still connected, born connected, dies connected.

That’s why ŋunhi li buŋgulnydja namanjamayun, munathany, warraw’ny’tja dhika nhā marrṯį nhirrpa’nhirrpān bili ŋunhi ngayi yolŋu ŋunhi goŋmirr ngayi yolŋu bukmak Dhuwa Yirritja bāŋyu.

Bukmak warrpam ŋunhi ḋali dhu bāyŋuthirr manikayyu ŋalitjalany dhu dhokumany ga balanya.

So everything, when we die, will be buried by ancestral song, you see.

Rumbalnydja napurr dhuwal mirithirr dhuyu ga yaka nhe dhu wurku’yundja napurrŋu bundurrnydja bili ngayi ga rom waŋa bukmak ɲaraka dhuwal dhuyu.

Our bodies are very sacred, so you must not disrespect our sacred names because the law says that all bones are sacred.

Ga ŋunhi napurr nguli burr’yun gamununguny aw miny’tjiny rulawandhun ŋunhiyiny goŋ-wataŋuw ga djunggayaw yan djāma,

Ga yuwalkṯja bukmak dhu luŋ’thundja mala manapanmirrnydja jurikiyiny bundurrwu dhawar’maranharaw.

So when we dance painted up with ochre or we paint ancestral designs on the body or the coffin, it is only those people responsible for performing and managing the funeral who allowed to do the painting.

And truly, everyone will gather and join together to do the right thing for finishing that sacred bone connection properly.

2 Goŋmirr (– hand, -mirr, having) literally ‘with hands’, means having relations around who will give support.
3 Yapa means both sister and mother’ mother’s mother’s mother. (See the diagram on Garŋgulkpuy’s paper The Yolŋu Child’s Pathway in this volume)
4 Warraw’ shade, sometimes used to denote a designated space where secret/sacred business is done.
5 Different clan groups have particular roles in a funeral (as described in Garŋgulkpuy’s paper The Yolŋu Child’s Pathway in this volume) because the body of the deceased is a sacred object through its ancestral connections.