

BUNDURRPUY

What Does Bundurr Mean?

Wapiriny Gurruwiwi

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Yo! Yothu nunhi nayi li dhawal-guyaṅirnydja dhunupan yan nunhi nayi bundurmirnydja yothuny. Yo! Yothu nunhi nayi li dhawal-guyaṅirnydja nunhi nayi bundurmirnydja Yothuny.

Bundurmirryirra nayi li, likanmirryirra, nayi dhuwal naraka nayi, mulkurr nayi, diltji nayi, mel nayi, marwat nayi, nunhi nayi bundurmirra warrpam'nha.

Nunhi ṅalapal nhawi malṅ'thuna nayi nunhi li yutjuwalany nunhi dhawal-guyaṅirnydja gal'kalmirryirr ga ṅalapalyirr

Ga yalala nayi dhu bāyṅuthirr nunhi nayi still goṅmirr² yān ṅe!

Goṅmirr yān nayi nunhiyiny nunhi dhu dhiṅgamany ṅuruṅiyi nayi goṅmirnydja bundurrun, bundurrun likannya nayi.

Yol nayi dhiyal gan nhinan, wahaṅur nayi, waha nhanṅu wāṅa, yol nhanṅu yapa³, yol nhanṅu māri ga yol nhanṅu ṅāndi'mirriṅu...

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 ...

¹ Beginning to tease out the meaning of bundurr, Wapiriny is linking the knees and elbows (the most potent source of Yolṅu connectedness metaphor) with all the other parts of the body (each with its own spiritual significance).

Njuruŋiyiny ŋayi ŋuli goŋmirrnydja, beŋur
ŋayi yutjuwala goŋmirr bundurrrmirra
ŋayi already, ŋunhi ŋayi li malŋ’thuna
ŋunhi ŋayi goŋmirra bundurrrmirra ŋayi ga
bäyŋuthirr ŋayi dhu, rakunydhirr ŋayi dhu
ŋunhi ŋalapal, yurr rakunydhirra.

Ŋayi dhu yothu ga goŋmirr yan ŋayi
even ŋayi yothu bäyŋuthirr wanhal
ŋayi dhu aŋeŋur bäyŋuthirr napuŋga aw
wulmandhirra ŋayi dhu still ŋayi goŋmirr
yan bili ŋunhi born goŋmirr ga bäyŋuthirr
ŋayi still goŋmirr yan.

That’s why ŋunhi li buŋgulnydja
ŋamaŋamayun, munathany, warraw⁴ny’tja
dhika nhä marrtji nhirra’pan bili
ŋunhi ŋayi yolŋu ŋunhi goŋmirr ŋayi
yolŋu bukmak Dhuwa Yirritja bäyŋu.

Bukmak warrpam ŋunhi ŋali dhu
bäyŋuthirr manikayyu ŋalitjalany dhu
dholkumany ga balanya.

Rumbalnydja napurr dhuwal mirithirr
dhuyu ga yaka nhe dhu warku’yundja
napurrŋ bundurrrnydja bili ŋayi ga rom
waŋa bukmak ŋaraka dhuwal dhuyu.

Ga ŋunhi napurr ŋuli burr’yun
gamunuŋguny aw miny’tjiny
rulawaŋdhun ŋunhiyiny goŋ-wataŋuw ga
djuŋgayaw yan djäma,

Ga yuwalktja bukmak dhu luŋ’thundja
mala manapanmirrnydja ŋurikiyiny
bundurrrwu dhawar’maranharaw.

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.

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 when funerals are made, the
sacred sand sculptures, the sacred shade,
and whatever else (sacred) are put in place,
that is done because every person’s body has
got connections whether it’s a Dhuwa or a
Yirritja person who dies.

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

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

So when we dance painted up with ochre or
we paint ancestral designs on the body or the
coffin, it is only those people responsible⁵ 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.