

Honouring the *Tjukurrpa*: Decolonising Appropriated Stories

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This paper discusses the decolonisation of appropriated *Tjukurrpa*: stories decontextualised from traditional culture. Decolonising appropriated stories returns First Nations' linguistic and cultural rights. *Tjukurrpa*, First Nations' governance, spiritual, and cultural structure, is taught through oral tradition. Early colonizers heard the *Tjukurrpa* stories and equated them to European children's stories. These stories were collected, often romanticized and made palatable for European audience, completely disconnecting the stories from the *Tjukurrpa*. These were referred to as Dreamtime stories negating their deep cultural role and connection.

Tjukurrpa does not have an easy description and it is impossible to adequately write it down in any dictionaries. It is equated to 'story' as in English but what is a 'story'? In Cambridge, Collins and Oxford Learner's Dictionary story is, 'description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events invented in order to entertain people'. Aboriginal culture does have stories and in the Goldfields region of Western Australia it is called *tjuma*. *Tjuma* is not necessarily sacred as *Tjukurrpa* and it can be memories, daily events, jokes, and messages that is the genre of re-count. Whereas *Tjukurrpa*, genre of re-tell, has multiple dimensions: physical like law, people, family, land, citizenship, work, responsibilities, ecology, and non-physical dimensions like cosmology, the origin, spiritual beings, power, embodiment, continuity, time, religion, respect, identity, essence, linkage, healing, foundation, map, formation, and leadership.

These dimensions do not have clear cut boundaries and the pillars are interconnected; everything bonds everything together and embodies the five pillars of Aboriginal societies: land, law, kinship, language, and ceremony.



Warlpiri People of Northern Territory

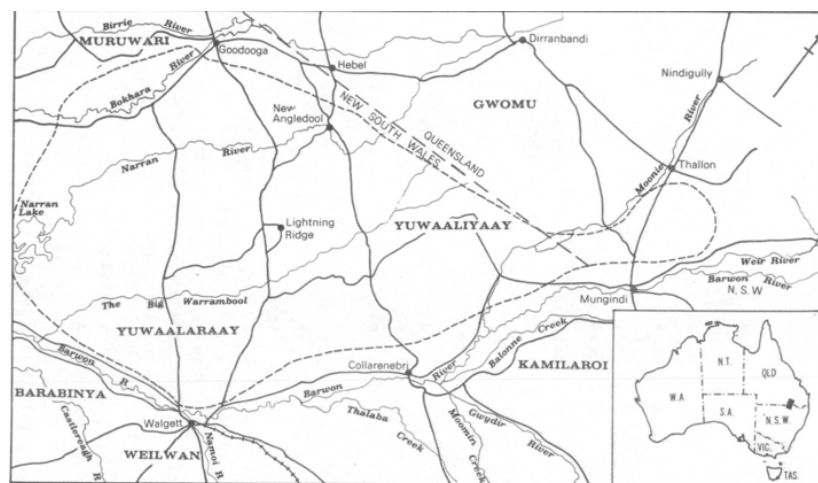
Tjukurrpa has been colonised through being recorded by non-Aboriginal people and re-told in written forms of European literary genres. The European re-interpretation of the *Tjukurrpa* is culturally de-contextualized and has become embedded in European fairy tale genre. Teachers and others working with children, then, teach ‘Aboriginal culture’ to Aboriginal children. Thereby displacing the children’s heritage cultural *Tjukurrpa*. This form of appropriation and cultural displacement weaponizes Aboriginal stories by re-shaping identity.

Appropriated stories are re-told in another language and removed from land. The lack of acknowledge of the Traditional Owner devalues kinship systems and disconnects from *Tjukurrpa* by alienating people to the law, ceremonies and responsibilities. They are marketed prioritising the public fame of the non-Aboriginal writer. As a result, some of the *Tjukurrpa tjuma* were forced to sleep, just like several sleeping languages, and waiting to be reclaimed and decolonised. Decolonisation of the *Tjukurrpa* is a process of Aboriginal reclamation of stories and cultural embedment.

Beginning of the chain appropriation

This chapter compares the Katherine Langloh Parker and Johanna Lambert’s works and shows the similarities of the appropriation processes took place in 1896 and in 1993. In 1896 Parker wrote down the *Tjukurrpa* stories from Yuwaalaraay people of New South Wales and published them as Christmas gift books for children. In 1993 Johanna Lambert extracted fourteen stories from Parker’s books and published them with commentaries as a spiritual book. The *Tjukurrpa* and the Traditional Owners are completely divorced in both instances.

Katherine Langloh Parker was born in South Australia in 1856 and lived in Bangate Station with her pastoralist husband, by the Narran River, amongst Yuwaalaraay people, Euahlayi [sic], in the north-western New South Wales. Parker recorded Yuwaalaraay people’s stories and published them as *Australian Legendary Tales: folklore of the Noongahburraahs as told to the Piccaninnies* (1896) and *More Australian Legendary Tales* (1898).



APPROXIMATE EXTENT OF YUWAALARAAY TERRITORY

A Grammar of Yuwaalaraay, Corinne J. Williams, 1980

Yuwaalaraay is a dialect of Kamilaroi language and classified as extremely endangered with only two or three speakers. The most recent studies on Yuwaalaraay language are known to be based on Corrine J. Williams's *A Grammar of Yuwaalaraay* published in 1980.

Yuwaalaraay, spoken between Walgett and Lightning Ridge, and Yuwaaliyaay, between Lightning Ridge and Mungindi, are – on linguistics ground – dialects of the same language as Kamilaroi. A good deal of Yuwaaliyaay culture and legends, and some words, were documented by Mrs K. Langloh Parker, especially in Australian Legendary Tales (1896) and The Euahlayi Tribe (1903) ... Kamilaroi is no longer actively spoken, although some of the older people do know a number of words.

*Australian Aboriginal Words in English, Their Origin and Meaning, Second Edition 2006,
R.M.W. Dixon, Bruce Moore, W.S. Ramson, Mandy Thomas*

Yuwaalaraay is a language in the very last stages of existence. The number of speakers with any fluency is small, not more than two or three old men. This study represents the remnants of a language which can never be expected to revive. It is sad indictment of European understanding and tolerance that the same can be said of so many Australian languages.

A Grammar of Yuwaalaraay, Corinne J. Williams, 1980

Parker made the decision to write down Yuwaalaraay people's *Tjukurrpa* when the demand for Indigenous cultural stories by the international publishing industry reached Australia. The demand started with the foundation of *The Folklore Society* in London, in 1878, which is still in existence (Muir, 1982). *The Folklore Society* has been interested in

'...traditional music, song, dance and drama, narrative, arts and crafts, customs and belief. We are also interested in popular religion, traditional and regional food, folk medicine, children's folklore, traditional sayings, proverbs, rhymes and jingles.'

The Folklore Society website.

Public interest in Indigenous cultures exponentially increased leading to the *International Folklore Congress* in London, in 1891. In that period, Indigenous cultures all around the world were believed to be exotic, for the entertainment of non-Indigenous society, and dying out. As quoted by Daisy Bates *smooth the dying pillow*. From a European perspective, Australia was expected to save the disappearing stories of First Nations' Peoples. This fuelled Parker's drive to 'save' the *Tjukurrpa* of a race fast dying out.

'...while there is yet time, to gather all the information possible of a race fast dying out, and the origin of which is so obscure. I cannot affect to think that these little legends will do much to remove that obscurity, but undoubtedly a scientific and patient study of the folk-lore throughout Australia would greatly assist thereto. I, alas! am but

amateur, moved to my work by interest in the subject, and in the blacks, of whom I have had some experience.

The time is coming when it will be impossible to make even such a collection as this, for the old blacks are quickly dying out, and the young ones will probably think it beneath the dignity of their so-called civilisation even to remember such old-women's stories.'

Australian Legendary Tales, 1896:Preface.

In 1896 *Australian Legendary Tales* with 32 stories was published by the publisher David Nutt with an introduction by Andrew Lang who was a writer, publisher, and member of The Folklore Society. At the time of the European invasion of Mexico as, Land described what was found in Mexican culture as '*...in the most romantic moment of history...*'. He compared the cultural findings of Mexican culture with Australia based on his reading of Parker's collection of stories. Lang concluded that Aboriginal people had no history and Australia was of little value, in comparison to Ancient Greek or Egyptian culture. His perception was with the start of colonisation the Aboriginal culture was valueless and dead. His use of the past tense throughout the Introduction of the book demonstrates this belief. (*Australian Legendary Tales, 1896*)

In 1896, the critic A.G. Stephens of *The Bulletin* wrote that the *Tjukurrpa* stories written by Parker had '*ethnologically little significance*' and that '*the Noongahburrahs are evidently as happy in thoughtlessness as all their kindred ... The undoubted value of the collection is chiefly that of a literary curiosity – the prattlings of our Australia's children, which even in their worthlessness must have a charm for a parent.*'

The Bulletin, January 9, 1896 quoted in My Bush Book, Marcie Muir, 1982

In her defence letter, Parker explains her methodology in writing the stories.

I can safely say that every idea in the legends in my books is the idea of a real Black – I am very careful to get them as truly as I can. First I get an old, old black to tell it in his own language (he probably has little English). I get a younger one to tell it back to him in his language; he corrects what is wrong, then I get the other one to tell it to me in English. I write it down, read it, and tell it back again to the old fellow with the help of the medium, for though I have a fair grasp of the language, I would not, in a thing like this, trust to my knowledge entirely. Then, when allusion to a rite or anything of that sort comes in, for the interest of readers I get them to give me full particulars, and add it, for otherwise, unless there were something unusual about this rite, they would not, every time describe it; and I would too, explain existing relationships to the elements which might be alluded to, and of some things, not knowing of quite the English equivalent, I have go as near as I can to be understood. I did not quite know at first whether these explanations were justifiable or not, nor could I get advice, but at length I decided that they were absolutely necessary for those not knowing the Blacks, and as

I made the storyteller tell them as they went along, they are really as much blackfellow as the rest.

The *Tjukurrpa* stories are often parts of songlines and they are collectively owned by Aboriginal people with each individual having responsibilities for a portion of the songline passing through the country. Traditionally, collective consultation is essential in order to make an interpretation concerning the *Tjukurrpa*. In contemporary times collective decision making, informed consent, is essential to determine whether the *Tjukurrpa* can be written or presented to people outside of that cultural group. In the same letter to A.G. Stephen, as in the above quotation, Parker reveals that she did not have the collective cultural permission, and her books lack acknowledgment of the Traditional Owners.

‘The Blacks to whom I told that I was credited with their pretty ideas, very scornfully said, “How you know? You nebber know sposin’ me nebber tell you. That peller womba (mad or deaf) altogether.” And then comes a spitting of contempt; and certainly it is hard that having taken their country, not so bloodlessly either as people would have us believe, we should not arrogate to ourselves their own poetical thoughts. But you will be cursing Blackfellows, thinking I am a crank...’

Quoted in *My Bush Book*, Marcie Muir, 1982

Consequently, Parker claimed the ownership of the *Tjukurrpa* and held the copyright of the written story. Since first published, these stories were in print for some years, then, before becoming out of print for decades as the demand for the Indigenous folklore declined. In 1950 Angus and Robertson reprinted and marketed *Australian Legendary Tales* which brought Parker the Children’s Book of the Year Award: Older Reader 1954. Traditional Owners were not consulted on the reprinting and had lost copyright of their *Tjukurrpa*. The stories became part of the public domain when the copyright protection of Parker’s books expired 70 years after her death in 1940. They are now available for free download on *Project Gutenberg Australia*, ‘a treasure-trove of literature - treasure found hidden with no evidence of ownership’ and on *fairytales.com* where they are marketed as fairy tales as Parker intended.

‘Though I have written my little book in the interest of folk-lore, I hope it will gain the attention of, and have some interest for, children- of Australian children, because they will find stories of old friends among the Bush birds; and of English children, because I hope that they will be glad to make new friends, and so establish a free trade between the Australian and English nurseries- wingless, and laughing birds, in exchange for fairy godmothers, and prince in disguise... ..little did they realise that the coming of Mitchellan was the beginning of their end, or that fifty years afterwards, from the remnant of their once numerous tribe, would be collected the legends they told in those days to their piccaninnies round their camp fires, and those legends used to make a Christmas booklet for the children of their white supplanters.’

Australian Legendary Tales, 1896, Preface.

A hundred years later

About a hundred years after the publication of Parker's books, Johanna Lambert manufactured *Wise Women of the Dreamtime, Aboriginal Tales of the Ancestral Powers*. The book was published by Inner Traditions International, USA, in 1993 and it is still in print. The information about the late writer Lambert is limited to these lines:

An Australian-born actress and writer, Johanna Lambert has been deeply involved in Aboriginal issues for many years. She studied with the renowned Aboriginal film and stage director Brian Syron and is also the editor of the audio edition of Wise Women of the Dreamtime.

This book contains fourteen stories extracted from Parker's books and classified under four titles: Tales of the Ancestral Powers, Tales of the Animal Powers, Tales of the Magical Powers, and Tales of Healing. The contents of the book have detailed personal commentary on cannibalism, 'spiritual, sexual, and emotional freedom' of the Aborigines (sic), male-female initiation, Dreamtime, social structures and law, kinship system, family and child care, and womanhood. Each story has a commentary, and Aboriginal Ancestors and Ancestral beings are equated to the gods and goddesses of Ancient Greek mythology and its concepts of virginity, true love, jealousy, revenge, punishment, and so on. Any Aboriginal ownership or cultural embedment of these stories was stripped by this production.

Lambert's book was published by the publisher Ehud Sperling, the founder of *Inner Traditions Bear and Company* and a member and author of *Sanatan Society*. *Sanatan Society* is an international networking association teaching Indian Vedic and Tantric traditions. *Inner Traditions* publishes books in spiritual, cultural, mythical, esoteric, occult, and philosophical subjects. The interest in Australian Aboriginal culture arose when the publisher Sperling claimed that Aboriginal people of Australia, ...as other Indigenous groups throughout the world, were often thought to be primitive. Sperling used his publications to prove otherwise, or thought he was. Johanna Lambert and her husband Robert Lawlor (1938-2022), the authors of *Inner Traditions*, were close friends with Sperling. The following anecdote is published in *Inner Traditions* official website in 2022 and it reveals the methodology of how Sperling, Lawlor, and Lambert cooperated in 'saving' Aboriginal people's pride.

'In 1989 Robert visited the Inner Traditions publishing house in Vermont, and the beginning of a new and intense collaboration began (with Ehud Sperling the founder of the publishing house). ... Robert moved to Australia. There, he met an actress, Johanna Lambert, at an acting class and fell in love. Robert explained the purpose of his visit to Inner Traditions; to seek help in publishing a book by Aboriginal rights activist Bobby McLeon about alcoholic rehabilitation based on Bobby's Aboriginal roots.

Although the concept was interesting and inspiring, Ehud felt that there was a greater need for a book on Aboriginal culture as a whole. Both Robert and Ehud had puzzled over what came before the great civilizations of Egypt, China, and India. All the great scholars, including Schwaller de Lubicz, had stopped with these great cultures. What came before those civilizations were the hunter-gatherers, often thought to be primitive,

but the Australian Aboriginals, as well as other Indigenous groups throughout the world, showed otherwise. Someone needed to show the world the depth of cultural devotion and the unbroken spiritual lineage spanning millennia of the Aboriginal people of Australia.

After receiving Robert's first draft, Ehud travelled to Australia to live with Robert and Johanna for a month and work on editing the book. Realizing the crucial need for illustrations and imagery to immerse the reader in the world of the Aboriginal Dreamtime, they got in touch with the National Museum of Victoria (now known as Museums Victoria), which holds the world's largest collection of Aboriginal art. The museum said they couldn't help them, but Ehud charmed the curator and she agreed to meet with them on New Year's Day to see the collection, which was not on public display. Robert and Ehud arrived at the museum on New Year's Day and were taken into an enormous former ballroom where every square inch was filled with art and artifacts, including Aboriginal canoes, burial logs, and implements.

The collection also included the entire Baldwin Spencer photographic archive, filled with sacred and secret images from the depths of Aboriginal culture. Ehud and Robert carefully selected 200 of the most unique and important photos. Together Robert, Johanna, and Ehud's dedication made Voice of the First Day: Awakening in the Aboriginal Dreamtime completed in 1991, one of the most important books on Indigenous culture Inner Traditions has published.'

Voice of the First Day was published in 1991 and Lawlor acknowledges the help he received in Australia.

I am very grateful to many institutes and individuals for providing the photographs for this book. They include the Museum of Victoria Council in Melbourne, Australia, and its helpful staff, especially Mary Lakic, who gave endless time and assistance while we sorted through nearly 3,000 photographs of the Baldwin Spencer Collection...

Lambert's book was published two years after her husband's. She discloses her advantageous connections in her acknowledgement.

To the publisher, Ehud Sperling, I am appreciative for the confidence he placed in my ability to express the value of these most archaic legends.

It appears the publisher wanted to show his appreciation for Lambert's help with the cultural collection theft and provided her with fame as an editor and commentator with copyright.

Lambert's only firsthand information appeared to come from during her visit to Bathurst Island in Northern Australia with her husband. Her relationship with the informants was more of an encounter with Aboriginal women – rather than a friendship. The women who claimed to have influenced and shaped Lambert's *imagination of feminine in Aboriginal culture* are not introduced

within their identities other than their names. Lambert emphasizes her connections with Aboriginal people rather than acknowledging people as the owners of the information.

The information she gathered and synthesized came from the books largely published in the USA, and largely from her husband Lawlor's book. She claims her personal interpretations to be the facts about Aboriginal language, customs, history, and the future.

One of the claims in her book is that:

No Aboriginal language has possessive pronouns. For example: 'my uncle' or 'my brother' would be expressed 'uncle me' or 'brother me'.

She quotes this information from *Voices of the First Day* by Lawlor who claims that Aboriginal people rejected agriculture, architecture, writing, and clothing. This statement echoes the concept of *Terra Nullius*, which Bruce Pascoe has clearly proved erroneous.

Fred Myer's *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self* by, 1986, states

The Dreamtime stories arose from listening to the innate intelligence within all things. In many Aboriginal languages the word 'listen' and the word 'understand' are the same.

This statement clearly indicates the limited understanding of First Nations' Languages.

The cover photo is taken by Heide Smith and the book contains no information about the person in the photo or why the information about the image is not disclosed. Heide Smith's personal website has many images of Tiwi people and it can only be assumed from one photo on Smith's website that the woman in the cover photo of the book could be the same Tiwi woman on Smith's website.

Lambert states that her *preparation for exploring these legends has not been an academic anthropology but rather her long friendship and association with the Aboriginal film and theatre director and drama teacher Brian Syron*. Based on her association with Syron, she equates *Tjukurrpa* to Shakespeare, and Chekhov referring to Syron's work style without knowing the fact that whether Brian Syron would have agreed with that today or not.

...Mr. Syron brought to the examination of Western dramatic literature a deeply symbolic vision, which he seems to draw from the archaic depths of his native culture. He worked with an intuitive sense that symbols resound through the transparency of time and that a symbolic essence or relationship found in a Dreamtime story can be equally discovered in a play by Shakespeare or Chekhov...

Wise Women of the Dreamtime, Introduction, 1993:4

In her book, Lambert intends to follow Katherine Langloh Parker's insight and interpret Parker's translations comparatively with other world mythologies (Introduction, 1993:5). By doing so, she equates the *Tjukurrpa* to non-Aboriginal concepts as a person outside of the cultural groups and without having the collective consent. Although, the stories of humanities might look similar in

some aspects, they are not the same. This compilation of unsolicited and questionable information about the *Tjukurrpa* is marketed in literary field without providing Aboriginal people with any authority in their own stories. While non-Aboriginal writers do not face any consequences of their misrepresentation of Aboriginal culture, the same thing cannot be said for Aboriginal people if they made a statement about the religions of the world like the one in the commentary of *Wahwee and Nerida*, (*Wise Women of the Dreamtime* 1993:23).

From Roman to Indian to Mexican to Aboriginal mythology, all the gods and Ancestors have been depicted as jealously craving the ecstatic depths of passion and rapture that romantic love inspires.

In *Welcome to Country*, Marcia Langton shares one of her anecdotes in Paris regarding to equation of Aboriginal stories with non-Aboriginal cultural norms.

I was in Paris many years ago at an international conference on Indigenous cultures when it was the fashion in French universities for students to interpret the 'meanings' of Aboriginal rock art through the lens of European psychological theories about sexual deviation. On a table in the foyer of the conference centre were piles of various documents published by local publisher. I flipped through a few and my skin crawled. The texts bore no resemblance whatsoever to the meanings of the rock art as explained by the Traditional Owners. One of these texts stated that the art referred to a particular sexual deviation, when in fact the rock art represented a Lightning Ancestor who rouses the world during the monsoon season with thunder and flashes of light. None of the students had been to Australia, and clearly there was a theoretical formula imposed by a Freudian anthropologist in a faraway Parisian classroom. My advice: Don't try out European theories on Aboriginal people.

Welcome to Country, Language Rules, 2019

Although, Lambert has *not wished to appropriate information nor speak for the Aboriginal people: rather, this book has been an imaginal voyage* (Introduction, 1993:5), she used the opportunity to become a published writer and manufactured a book from what should have left as spiritual conversations amongst her friends.

These are a few examples of unethical practices used to appropriate *Tjukurrpa*, appropriate copyright, and disempower Aboriginal story holders.

Towards the Conclusion

When non-Aboriginal people desire to work with Aboriginal people or use Aboriginal cultural heritages, they must be honest to themselves with their true intentions. *Aboriginal people write primarily to inform their children and other family members; not for fame as a writer* (*True Tracks*, Terri Janke). Therefore, the intentions of non-Aboriginal writers must not be to re-culturalise

Aboriginal peoples, nor to impose their ‘expertise’ on Aboriginal subjects. It is paramount that policy and protocols are followed to ensure that the rights of the written work remain with the custodians; natural speech recordings must be done whenever possible; and ‘correct’ examples must be searched for and taken as guides.

Policy and protocols Some policy and protocols includes signing written agreements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Before reaching to agreement stage the following principles of *True Tracks* by Terri Janke, 2021:182 must be visited:

When a non-Indigenous writer includes Indigenous content, the True Tracks principles should be considered, especially:

- **Respect:** *Is the writer following the protocols, and can they demonstrate that they have followed them? Have they understood the issues?*
- **Consent and Consultation:** *Have Indigenous people been consulted?*
- **Interpretation:** *Should the non-Indigenous writer be the person to tell the story, or refer to that knowledge in that way? Are they telling a whole story, or including a character? What is the point of view being represented? How is the knowledge represented?*
- **Maintaining Indigenous Cultures:** *How will this publication impact on the culture of Indigenous people?*

Natural speech recordings convey unbiased and unambiguous data and the lack of natural speech recordings only transfers junk-data. Katherine Langloh Parker was living in a transitional environment where Yuwaalaraay language was fluently spoken in its pre-colonial form. As Corrine J. Williams states in *A Grammar of Yuwaalaraay*:

The spelling of the Yuwaaliyaay [a close-dialect] words in these lists is very difficult to understand, and not consistent in the representation of similar sounds. Mrs Parker also published one story in Yuwaaliyaay. This story ‘Dinewan Boollarnah Goomlegubbon’ is included in her book Australian Legendary Tales published in 1896. Unfortunately, I have not been able to decipher her orthography, so the text is of little value.

Correct examples to follow *It is us, speaking for ourselves.*

When the *Tjukurrpa*, the sacred stories and songs, are written down by Traditional Owners, the voice of the Traditional Owners is heard throughout the book. Traditional Owners remain loyal to the original intend of the act of writing because the knowledge written down is to pass on to the children. Therefore, it is essential that the children are given the knowledge relevant to their own families and given by relevant people.

Songspirals, Sharing Women’s Wisdom of Country Through Songlines by Gay’Wu Group of Women, Allen and Unwin, 2019, written by The Sisters Laklak Burarrwaja, Ritjilili Ganambar,

Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubbs and Banbapuy Ganambarr are elders of the Yolŋu people of North East Arnhem Land is an example for this.

This book is important and powerful because it comes out of Yolŋu hearts, Yolŋu mouths. It is us, speaking for ourselves.

Songspirals, Respecting Country, 2019: X

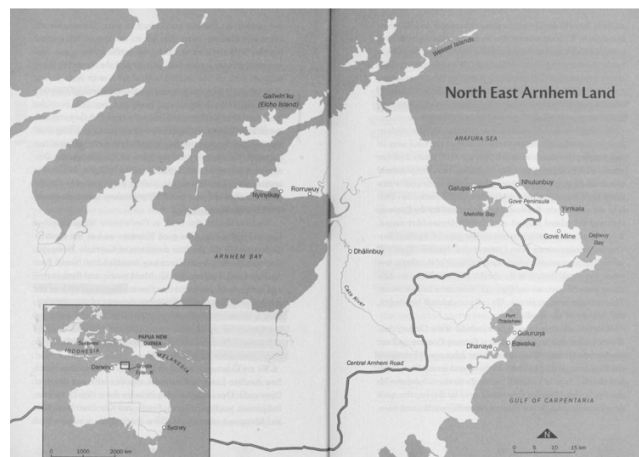
The Sisters and three *ngapaki*, *non-Indigenous*, supporters are the founders of the *Bawaka Collective*, *Gay'wu Group of Women*, the 'dilly bag women's group' and they have been collaborating to strengthen Yolŋu culture since 2006.

Since 2007 the Bawaka Collective has focused on the transformative potential of Indigenous-led tourism to strengthen communities, progress self-determination and contribute towards inter-cultural understandings through the communication of Yolŋu knowledge for non-Indigenous audiences. Their collaboration is based on the development of trust, respect and mutual benefits.

Bawaka Collective website

Bawaka Collective website includes *Intercultural Communication Handbook* alongside with numerous articles, videos and presentations, teaching materials, information about intercultural sharings, and a special category for the book *Songspirals*.

Songspirals begins with a *Dedication* and continues with *Respecting Country*. In this part, *The Sisters* give detailed information about their land as it is essential to emphasize that they are telling their own part of the songlines and not overtaking other cultural groups's parts. It is the open address of their 'home'.



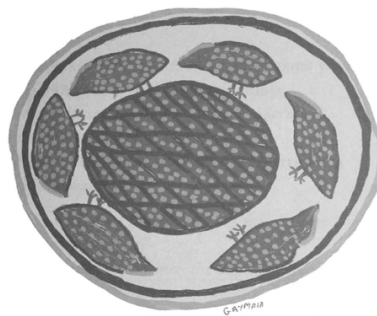
We sisters, Laklak Burarrwaja, Ritjilili Ganambar, Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubbs and Banbapuy Ganambarr, together with our daughter Djawundil Maymuru, speak from

our place, our Country, Rorruwuy, Dätiwuy land and Bawaka, Gumatj land, Yolŋu Country, in North East Arnhem Land in Australia.

The Sisters give detailed information about the each artwork included in the book. *Djalkiri* drawing in the Introduction, for instance, is *Mum's artwork of the quail, Djirikitj, is the image used at the start of the introduction. It shows renewal and sacred fire. The six baby quails on her screenprint are us four sisters, our brother, Djali, and our oldest sister, Wulara, who passed away as a little girl. To our mum, we are the new generation.*

Songspirals, Djalkiri, 2019:XVII

Djalkiri



Gaymala Yunupingu,, Djirikitj (1998).

(The Buku-Larrngay Mulka Art Centre archives)

Non-Indigenous, *ŋapaki*, supporters of this book are introduced by *The Sisters* and the voice of *The Sisters* is not interrupted by a chapter or a few lines written by the supporters. Inclusive language of ‘we’ throughout the book connects the non-Indigenous reader to the culture and it arouses curiosity to find further information. The *Notes* at the end of the book provides with a long list of resources for the curious reader. The Glossary is carefully compiled respecting the ‘deeper meanings’ of some words in the songlines. Traditional Owners and the three non-Aboriginal supporters own the copyright. *Songspirals* is the joint winner of the 2020 Prime Minister’s Literary Awards, Non-Fiction and is Shortlisted for the 2020 Victorian Premier’s Award for Non-Fiction.

The methodology used in *Songspirals* includes transcribing and translation of the natural speech recordings.

We have discussed these translations together and with the custodians of each song. We have worked carefully on the writing of the yolŋu matha words, and the way they are translated, written and punctuated in English, to make sure they give a strong sense of what the songspirals mean to us. The translations are not ‘the songspirals’, as if the whole

songspiral could be captured in words and fixed in a book. No. the words are those that were shared in a particular context, a particular time and place, by a particular person who has the authority to do so.

Songspirals, Djalkiri 2019:XXXVII

In the *Part 1: Wuymirri*, *The Sifers* explain how they transcribed:

The Wuymirri we share now is Gumatj language and comes from a recording of our mum doing milkarri of it a long time ago. Our mum's younger sister Djerrkju helped us transcribe and translate it, and we all sat around the recording together, listening to it so carefully, playing it over and over again on our smartphones, learning and teaching so much.

Songspirals, Part 1: Wuymirri: 2019:4

CONCLUSION

Decolonisation of the *Tjukurrpa* returns the language, stories, and songs to Traditional Owners. One field that freed from appropriation will create a chain-effect on other fields of, as listed in *True Tracks* by Terri Janke, *arts, architecture and industrial design, music, film and television, writing, dance, bush food and medicine, science, Indigenous research, education, technology, galleries, libraries, archives and museums, tourism, business, and fashion*. In the essence of the *Tjukurrpa* all these fields are connected.

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