

THE NGARDANGARLI STORY OF CULTURE AND HISTORY IN NGARLUMA & YINDJIBARNDI COUNTRY

# *KNOW THE SONG*



# *KNOW THE COUNTRY*

Some of the photographs that appear in this booklet are of people that have passed away.  
We thank the families of these dear ones for allowing us to keep them in the booklet.

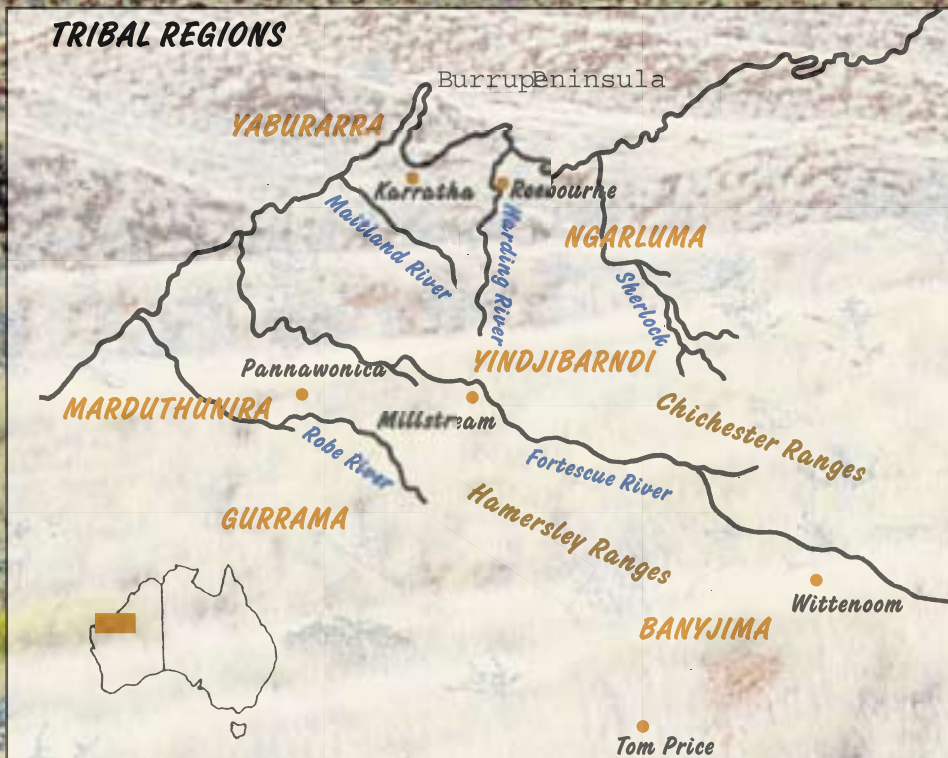




James Solomon (Malbaru) Ngarluma Elder  
(with Ngarla/Nyamal relationship) Born at  
Yagurru-nha (Old Woodbrook)  
(Frank Rijavec)



Roger Solomon, (Yirra Bindiri)  
Ngarluma/Yindjibarndi elder  
Narrator/Co-Writer "Exile and The Kingdom"  
(Collin Beard)



#### RIVERS:

*Sherlock : Jigurranka*

*Harding : Ngurin*

*Maitland : Yirramala*

*Fortescue : Yarndanyirra*

*Robe : Jajiyurra*

#### PLACE NAMES:

*Millstream : Jirndawurrina*

*Hamersley Ranges : Gambulanha*

*Wittenoom : Nyamingunha*

*Karraatha : Gardatha*

*Roebourne : Yirramagardu*

*Pannawonica : Bandawarnangga*

*Burrup Peninsula : Murijuga*

Yirra Bindiri was our inspiration.

This is what he stood for:

"My home runs from tablelands to sea

My people is what's inside me

My mission is to be free

I am Yirra Bindiri"

He stood against the change of times

Stayed true to this heart of mine

Walked among my strong beliefs

In his father's company

Beautiful land, beautiful song

Teach my people to walk as one

'Cause someday I truly believe

You and I will be free

(Words by Migu Woodley 2001)

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Wimiya King, Yindjibarndi Elder Born at Thunggawarna  
(Carl von Brandenstein)

## MORNING STAR SONG\*

wirrwi ngardangarda yunurrula maji  
wirrwi ngardangarda yunurrula maji

yunurrula maji  
Barndurrarna milbayila ganarala ganaganamarna  
Barndurrarna milbayila ganarala ganaganamarna

ganaganamarna  
bunyjad mulya wayawirri thulala ngarri  
bunyjad mulya wayawirri thulala ngarri  
bunyjad mulya wayawirri thulala



early breeze blowing  
I am lying down half awake  
morning star showing itself  
bringing first light  
to the cold dewy morning  
under the milky way  
I am lying awake now

Jawi in Yindjibarndi by Wimiya King

## NGURRA - Homelands

Our name for Roebourne is Yirramagardu. Many people think that Yirramagardu is home for our people. Well it might be today, but only a few Ngarluma lived here until the government started pushing us in off our homelands in the late 1940s.

The heart of Ngarluma country is Yirramagardu (Roebourne), Yindjibarndi belong to Jirndawurrina (Millstream), Banyjima to Nyamblingunha (Wittenoom), Gurrama to Hammersley Station and the Robe River, Marduthunira to Mardi Station, Yaburarra (northern Ngarluma) to Murijuga (Burrup Peninsula).

The Hamersley Ranges (Gambulanha) run from Gurrama, through Yindjibarndi to Banyjima country following the valley of the great Fortescue River which we call Yarndanyirra - 'sun mirror'.

Long ago Yarndanyirra was dry, until Barrimirndi - the great water snake - came from the sea chasing after two boys who broke the Law. He traveled under the ground and at each place where he busted out of the dry river to smell where those two Law breakers were, Barrimirndi made yindangali (deep permanent pools).

He finally got up at Nhanggangunha (Deep Reach) and lifted the Law breakers into the sky in a wananggaa (willy willy). They were hit with flying sticks, breaking their arms so they were useless. Barrimirndi got ready then, his thumbu (anus) opened wide and red to the sky and when they fell out of the sky, he swallowed them through his thumbu and drowned the whole tribe in the biggest flood of water. Today Barrimirndi rests deep down in the pool he made at Nhanggangunha. He is the protector of water places all along Yarndanyirra right up to Nhanggangunha. We don't think Barrimirndi is bad, we respect him because he's a giver of water, of life. He only gets wild if the laws for water places are broken.



## NGURRA-NYUJUNG GAMU - *When the World was Soft*

Ceremony, kinship and Tribal Law are the heart and soul of our life - they connect us to the beginning of the world. In our Law it is said that in the beginning the sky was very low. When the creation spirits got up from the ground, they lifted the sky and the world out of the sea. The creation spirits are called Marrga. They still live in the rocky mountains and gullies. In the early morning the mist over the water is smoke from their breakfast fires. If Marrga are not approached and spoken to in the proper way, they might hurt visitors or make them sick. It was the Marrga and Minkala/Mangunyba (Skygod) that named and shaped the country, then all the birds and animals, and finally the Ngardangali (Aboriginal people) came from the Marrga themselves. In other places they call this the 'dreaming', but here we call it Ngurra Nyujunggamu - 'when the world was soft'.



Engraving of Marrga, creation spirit (Frank Rijavec)



The Burndud, "Where the Law started" - Alec Ned (Jawarda) & Woodley King [foreground], Berri Malcolm (Mara), Hilda Jacob, Shirley Woodley [background] (Frank Rijavec)

There are places all along the river that show the Marrga's work. At Ganyiyana (on a part of the river called Birlinbirlin) there is a circular track that was worn into the soft world by the Marrga women as they danced around the men who sang the very first Law ceremony. Later the world became hard, leaving the path of their dance in the river bedrock for all time. We call our Law Birdarra, and this song and dance ring the Burndud - the very first Law ground.

After creation, this law was carried to many tribes in the north and east, where it was given new names and new life in the languages of all the nations where it found a home. Tribes all over the North-west still pay respect to our holy land whose Law travelled thousands of miles across the desert to reach as far as Uluru in the Northern Territory.



## BIRLINBIRLIN SONG

Birlinbirlin ngarri thurruwunggurru nhawa Tharyawirdi  
garba yawurrji bayanurla  
Birlinbirlin ngarri thurruwunggurru nhawa Tharyawirdi  
garba yawurrji bayanurla

yawurrji bayanurla  
yalarra mayagu garla nyirndinyirndi ngundangunda  
ngardima banyirna waalarni ngurra Yirribinyanha  
yalarra mayagu garla nyirndinyirndi ngundangunda  
ngardima banyirna waalarni ngurra Yirribinyanha  
ngurra Yirribinyanha  
yirdiinha ngali Mirndulula barni yirdiyarri nhawa  
wararrala bayarnmarda  
yirdiinha ngali Mirndulula barni yirdiyarri nhawa  
wararrala bayarnmarda

wararrala bayarnmarda  
yinda ngarri bawa warrubari wirna Jinbinayina nana  
ngalgari wulawula lawa  
yinda ngarri bawa warrubari wirna Jinbinayina nana  
ngalgari wulawula lawa



wind from the sea  
blowing over the flat rocks at Birlinbirlin  
I see Tharyawirdi Gorge  
the wind belonging to the sea-side snake is rising  
blowing up-river  
roaring through  
the wind from the sea is blowing up-river  
roaring through  
trees touch me...  
a fire is burning there  
loaded full with spirit power  
they are dancing, dancing  
round and round  
stamping on the ground  
over and over  
on the ground at Yirribinyanha...  
at Yirribinyanha I see two of us travelling together  
to Mirndulula  
I rest now  
I see the path to follow  
I see the wild wind coming  
covering up their tracks  
wild wind coming over  
where the deep dark water lays...  
I feel tired now  
ripples on the water at Jinbinayina Pool  
the sound of beating yandies  
I see ripples on the water  
where the deep water lays  
I hear the sound of beating yandies

Jawi in Yindjibarndi by Toby Wiliguru Bambardu  
Carried by Yilbie Warrie

## CARRYING THE LAW

Wajbala (white men) got the bible. When we put young fellas through the Law we've got the Burndud, given from the Gods a real long time ago." (Woodley King)

The track of the Burndud dance can be seen in the dust of Law grounds wherever we celebrate the initiation of boys today. "When young fellas go through Law that's when they become respected as a man. Until they go through Law, Aboriginal Elders class them as kids. Don't matter how old they are, they're still classed as kids." (Johnny Walker) The Birduwangu (initiates) are taught to respect our people, our culture and our land, and have the responsibility of carrying the Law.

There is a really close and joyful feeling during Law time. Everyone knows what they have to do and how to work together. There is a place for everyone. The town and its problems are left behind as people join in with families to celebrate the initiation of their sons.

If they take their Law seriously, the initiated men will learn more each season. They will continue learning from the wisest Law carriers for the rest of their lives until they also become accepted as Law men of high degree.

"My heart will always think about this story that belongs to the old people. That's what's keeping me happy. Doesn't matter how many Wajbala there are, because I've got ground to stick on it." (Woodley King)

Law ties us to a history that reaches back to the creation of this country. It makes us who we are.



Wilyanmuna (Old Whalebone), Birdarra Lawman  
(J.B. Quealy)



Birdarra Law, ceremonial markings of the 'Kangu-ngali' and 'Jinjangu' (J.B. Quealy)



Four more horses were landed safely this morning and we were returning to the vessel for another pair, when a party of fourteen natives made their appearance at the camp. Our number being small, I determined not to let them enter the camp. I therefore tried at first to make them understand that we had taken possession for the present and did not want their company. They were however very indignant at our endeavours to drive them away and very plainly ordered us off to the ship.<sup>[1]</sup>

Francis T. Gregory, Government Surveyor, Nickol Bay, 1861.



Tribesmen in ceremonial dress (Battye Library 4157 B/13)

The Government have granted me two free stock runs at Tien Tsin Harbour of 100,000 acres each, and I have selected two very good blocks on the Fortescue river... Anderson and Co. are getting on very well, they have some of the best country in the North, in extent nearly one million acres. There is about 5 million acres already taken up on this district which has made a great hole in the good country near the coastline...<sup>[2]</sup>



Tribesmen chained by invaders (Battye Library 5329 B/1)

Alexander McRae, Pearler/Pastoralist, 1866

I didn't have time to write by last mail as I was very busy getting my darkies together for pearling. I've got a very good crowd this season, nearly 40.

Jack as been out after darkies and is expected daily now.<sup>[3]</sup>

Duncan McRae, Pearler/Pastoralist, 1881

## MARNDAMARANGGA- CHAINHAND

A new law came to our land with the British invasion in 1863. Government Surveyor Gregory reported that our land was good for sheep and cattle, so Wajbala in boats started coming. Within eighteen months they had stolen three million acres of our land for pastoral leases.

Soon after the sheep were landed they found pearl shell, and men hoping to get rich quick rushed in from everywhere. Cossack and the Dampier Archipelago became some of the richest pearling grounds in the world.

The more workers they 'owned', the quicker they made their money, so pearlers would fight amongst each other to get their hands on our men, women and children to dive for shell and a slave trade started up. This was happening in the Pilbara soon after America had fought its Civil War and outlawed slavery.

Hunting parties of pearlers and blackbirders (slave traders) would ride inland along the rivers and round up mobs of our people and then, under the force of whips and guns and chains, march them back to boats that would cart them off to islands where they would be held until they were needed for diving, or sold.



Ngarluma tribesmen, Maitland River (Battye Library 5002 B/44)



Wajbala government had laws against slave trading, but the Government Resident and magistrate of the district, Robert Sholl, turned a blind eye - his sons and friends were pearlers.

Later when Colonel Angelo became the Government Resident he tried to bring slave traders to justice in the court. The settlers threatened to kill him. You see, using our people as slaves was supported by everyone who was making money out of it, including Members of Parliament, Justices of the Peace and magistrates. One Member of Parliament even said that pearling had 'a civilising influence on niggers'

It is almost impossible to get any white evidence in these cases, the feeling being so strong against the police for taking any steps against the pearlers in favour of the natives. And if any of the justices sit with the Government Resident it is impossible to get a conviction as all the honourable justices are very slightly interested in the pearling and the native question.<sup>[4]</sup>

Police Constable Payne, 1887



Even boys were chained (Battye Library, 86833 P)

We did not just give in to slavery and murder under the colonists - hundreds of our people were killed as they fought for their freedom, their honour and their lives. There was one particularly cruel blackbirder named John Shea who was tracked up the river, ambushed and killed by our warriors. They then 'operated' on him and took his kidney fat - his power - power that our Marban men (spirit doctors) could use against other slave hunters.



Arrested for 'absconding' and sheep stealing (Battye Library, 3039 P)



Lawman (Battye Library, 3002 P)



Take the sale of a station. Three questions were always put by the buyer, of which the third was the vital one. How many acres ? How many miles of fencing ? How many niggers ? The niggers always went as part of the stock. If there were no niggers, or not enough, the sale was off or the price dropped. They are indispensable to the station owners, and if their race passes away, a great deal of the pastoral country will be shut up for good. White labour rates are too high for the pastoralist to pay. <sup>[5]</sup>

William Lamden Owen, 1889



Station workers (Battye Library, 4493B)

For years pearlers and blackbirders had been getting away with making slaves of our people, but in the 1886 the Wajbala government made it even easier by passing laws that made it legal for squatters and pearlers to work our men, women and children, as young as 10 years old. All the bosses had to do was get a 'signature' on a 'contract', a piece of paper which many of our people did not understand or sign by their own free will. They were fed basic rations but never paid.

If one of our people escaped from their boss, this was called 'absconding' and all a squatter had to do was ask the police to hunt them down. When caught by the police the 'absconder' could get three months jail with hard labour for breaking the 'labour contract'.



Workers, Cooyapooya Station (Battye Library, 24079P)



Station workers, Millstream (Battye Library, 665 B/6)



Station workers, Marndabulangana Station (Battye Library, C.H. Powell Collection 3001P)



While many prisoners convicted of absconding or sheep stealing were locked up in the Roebourne jail with hard labour, many others – those who resisted most strongly - were taken by ship to the Rottne Island Native Prison, a ‘concentration camp’ off the coast of Fremantle, where many of our men died from influenza and other cold-sickness.

The Ngarda word for policeman, still used today, is Marndamarangga, which means “Chainhand”.



Roebourne Jail (Battye Library, 3040P)



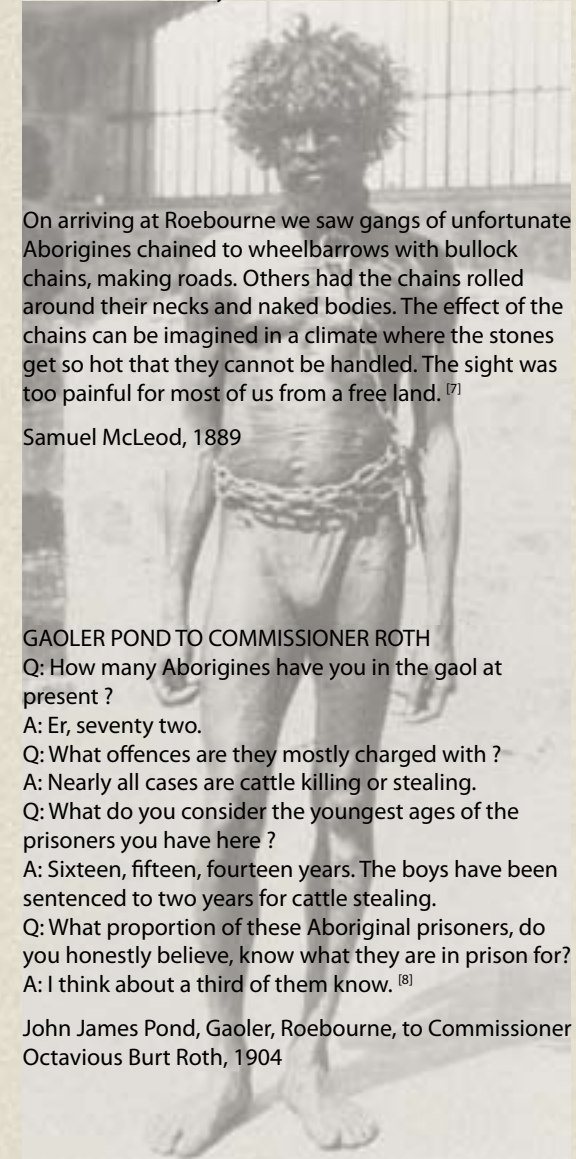
Police and their prisoner (Battye Library, 20615P)



Roebourne Jail (Battye Library 685 B/2)

Tuesday 16th, arrived J. Best's home station at noon and arrested four natives on warrant for sheep stealing, and also took two native women as witnesses... continued station trek arresting natives and putting them on the chain... arrived Roebourne and handed over 10 prisoners and 6 witnesses to gaoler Barnaby. <sup>[6]</sup>

Police Constable Payne, 1887



On arriving at Roebourne we saw gangs of unfortunate Aborigines chained to wheelbarrows with bullock chains, making roads. Others had the chains rolled around their necks and naked bodies. The effect of the chains can be imagined in a climate where the stones get so hot that they cannot be handled. The sight was too painful for most of us from a free land. <sup>[7]</sup>

Samuel McLeod, 1889

GAOLER POND TO COMMISSIONER ROTH

Q: How many Aborigines have you in the gaol at present ?

A: Er, seventy two.

Q: What offences are they mostly charged with ?

A: Nearly all cases are cattle killing or stealing.

Q: What do you consider the youngest ages of the prisoners you have here ?

A: Sixteen, fifteen, fourteen years. The boys have been sentenced to two years for cattle stealing.

Q: What proportion of these Aboriginal prisoners, do you honestly believe, know what they are in prison for?

A: I think about a third of them know. <sup>[8]</sup>

John James Pond, Gaoler, Roebourne, to Commissioner Octavius Burt Roth, 1904



## FLYING FOAM MASSACRE

We won a few battles but didn't stand a chance against Wajbala bullets, guns, chains and prisons with our spears.

The Yaburarra, whose tribal land runs along the Burrup Peninsula, suffered the worst from the pearling boom. They were nearly wiped out by diseases and in 1868 were shot out by a posse of pearlers and pastoralists dispatched by Government Resident Sholl.

A pearler had been raping our women and he was speared. A policeman was also killed when trying to arrest Yaburarra men. In revenge, Sholl's expedition shot between 40 and 60 men, women and children at the Flying Foam Passage and at King Bay (opposite the North West Shelf Gas supply base). This atrocity is known as the Flying Foam Massacre.

Today Yaburarra country is sinking under the burden of unrelenting mining and gas infrastructure development for resource projects including Woodside Energy's massive gas plant, and Rio Tinto's Pilbara Iron and Dampier Salt operations. The many Yaburarra rock engravings and sacred places that survived the development make one of the biggest and most important collections of ceremonial rock art in the world. Ngarluma elders continue to watch over, but fear for the future of the sacred places of their decimated northern-Ngarluma kin.



Yaburarra engraving, Burrup Peninsula (Peter Kendrick)

It is very well known by all old hands about Nickol Bay and the Flying Foam Passage, that in one day there were quite sixty natives, men, women and children, shot dead. The natives themselves have shown me the skulls of fifteen who were shot. Three of the skulls were those of children, and two of these small skulls had bullet holes through them. <sup>[9]</sup>

David Carley, 1885

The settlers that were in that party were as justified in obeying orders as British soldiers when they shot Kaffirs, Zulus, Abyssinians or any other inferior race, and for which they were frequently decorated with medals. There was nothing in the nature of a massacre, nor was there any desire, wish or intention to deal anything but stern justice to savages, who are incapable of understanding any lessons, but might is right. <sup>[10]</sup>

Alexander Robert Richardson, 1892



Standing Stones erected by the Yaburarra, overlooking King Bay massacre site (Department of Indigenous Affairs)



## RACECOURSE WHARLU (Water Snake)

maya galinba ngunu warnda yundu mayalangu  
bunggana yardawarninguna birridan manguna  
maya galinba ngunu  
gurrarngurrarn mirrayangu birridan (manguna)  
Yirramagardula ngarri  
bawa yardawarninguna

Coming back, rain, he singing:

maya galinba ngunu  
gurrarngurrarn yarna malula  
birridan manguna  
maya galinba ngunu  
gurrarngurrarn yarna malula  
birridan manguna  
warnda yundu mayalangu  
gurrarngurrarn yarna malula



people are yelling  
"it's coming back towards the houses"  
rainstorm smashing up the trees, the houses over there  
rain getting stronger  
storm wind making the leaves fly  
breaking everything up  
mulga parrot is calling out  
(that bird belonging to the sea snake)  
is bringing the storm winds  
the flood is getting stronger, rising higher  
Roebourne lying under water

Coming back, rain, he singing:

storm coming back towards the houses  
mulga parrot calling it back  
storm wind making things fly  
breaking everything up  
coming back towards the houses  
mulga parrot coming back  
storm wind making things fly  
breaking everything up  
storm smashing up the trees, the houses  
mulga parrot coming back  
Jawi in Yindjibarndi by Old Tumbler

## RATION CAMPS AND RESERVES

By 1900 our lands had become overstocked, the plains were eaten bare and waterholes overrun with sheep and cattle. Kangaroos were shot in their thousands and bush tucker was hard to find. If you didn't work for the squatter, you starved.

But squatters would only feed the families who were useful, the old and sick, and others ('troublemakers') who were just not wanted on the stations, were then pushed into Government ration camps. Young, strong men and women who were supposed to be on the stations working, were not permitted to camp with their elders in the ration camps, and if found there, were forced out of these camps by police and native welfares. The young were broken apart from their elders. You can imagine the heart-ache and anger this caused.

Tablelands Ration Camp (near Tambrey Station) was the largest ration camp in Yindjibarndi country. We call it Buminginha. As a young man Wimia King was caught at Bumingi by a policeman who punched him to the ground and ordered him back to the neighbouring station. Wimia picked up a tomahawk where he fell and chased the policeman back into the cab of his truck. Later he was arrested and taken to Broome for three months jail.

Then Tablelands Ration Camp was closed because it was cheaper and easier for the government to hand out rations if our people were mustered off their tribal country into bigger camps on the coast. Over the years this forced all our people, who were not working for the squatters, off their land. They were moved from one camp to the next until tribes were all mixed in together. Most ended up in Roebourne Native Reserve.

This moving of Yindjibarndi into Ngarluma country made the snake that belonged to the Ngarluma angry and he got up to drive the 'stranger people' away. Yindjibarndi people who were camping near the racecourse thought they were going to get killed when their camp was smashed by wild rain and wind. They called out to their own Barrimirndi from Nhanggangunha (Millstream) to come and save them. The two snakes fought a long battle in the sky above the reserve, then finally the snake belonging to the Ngarluma was pushed back out to sea and Yindjibarndi people were allowed to stay in Yirramagardu.

## POLICEMAN\* (Chainhand)

Marndamarangga jinangga ngajulgu  
Summonji ngali Mugurinanguru  
Thurndi ngarrila kurila  
Mindinyinba buru  
Thuru ganu guru buru  
gumba nani wani



Chainhand is on my tracks  
with a pocket-full of summons' from Twelve Mile Camp  
I dive for cover, north!  
under the river flotsam  
head inside the bushes  
just my face poking out  
Jawi in Nyiyabali/Nyamal by Binyringu



Waiting for rations (Battye Library, 76962P)



## BURRBURR BIRD\*

(Coucal Pheasant)

burrburr barni nhurdu  
burrburr barni nhurdu  
muri jina marnma yabulgurru  
garrajili bangu

burrburr barni nhurdu  
burrburr barni nhurdu  
muri jina marnma yabulgurru  
garrajili bangu

yinda nhurdu barni Babamuthugganha  
ngayiny wirlimarnma gurdudagarnma  
yinda nhurdu barni Babamuthugganha  
ngayiny wirlimarnma gurdudagarnma



pheasant is here  
pheasant is here  
following his tracks down the river  
deep into the scrub  
here he is at Babamuthugganha pool !  
(Government Pool)  
I still my breath

Jawi in Ngarluma by Gurrigi



Robert Churnside (Barrarurru) born at Murrumbari-Ngurra (Black Beetle increase site) and daughter Linda (Ijii) (Carl von Brandenstein)

## MOUNT SATIRIST\*

(gankala) gangarmarna  
warrimarila  
yirndirri yulayula  
Narnuna garri  
gankala gangarmarna warrimarila  
yirndirri yulayula  
Narnuna garri  
birngirri wirdiwirdi warrimarila  
yurndiri yulayula yilinkarrina  
marnda wangurila  
bulirri garba  
marnda wangurila yilinkarri



from high up  
the flat country shows itself  
through the dust haze  
Narnuna Hill stands up  
above the flat country  
through the dust haze  
a rocky road climbs the hill  
and winds around it  
I am climbing at full speed  
up along the rocky road that winds  
around the hill

Jawi in Yindjibarndi/Ngarluma by  
Robert Churnside, Barrarurru.



Black Hill Pool (Baranggunjiyarra) (John Patterson)



Murrumbari Thalu  
Ngarluma increase  
site for Black Beetle



## GOLD FEVER\*

marayunu nyinda  
 marayunu "thula-gunjimuna"  
 marayunu nyinda  
 marayunu "thula-gunjimuna"  
 marayunu nyinda  
 marayunu "thula-gunjimuna"  
 marayunu nyinda  
 marayunu "thula-gunjimuna"  
 marayunu nyinda  
 marayunu "thula-gunjimuna"

thulhu warnda nawuna  
 thulhu warnda warnda wandurala  
 thulhu warnda nawuna  
 thulhu warnda warnda wandurala  
 thulhu warnda nawuna  
 thulhu warnda warnda wandurala

marayunu nyinda birringula warnina  
 marayunu nyinda birringula warnina  
 marayunu nyinda birringula warnina

marayunu nyinda  
 marayunu "thula-gunjimuna" banganana garri wirndurana  
 marayunu nyinda  
 marayunu "thula-gunjimuna" banganana garri wirndurana  
 marayunu nyinda  
 marayunu "thula-gunjimuna"  
 marayunu nyinda  
 marayunu "thula-gunjimuna"



you poor man  
 poor man on your own  
 like a single tree bent over  
 fossicking through the scrub  
 trees everywhere !  
 fossicking all by himself  
 poor man, alone  
 you poor man  
 not knowing which way to go  
 standing in one place

Jawi in Yindjibarndi by Coppin Dale  
 "I made a song about old people looking for them gold out in  
 alluvial country.



(John Patterson)



Coppin Dale (Garargeman or Yinbal),  
 Founding Chairman Ieramugadu Group  
 (Carl von Brandenstein)

## THE JEALOUS MARALGA\*(Marrga)

naruiagu nurna paniru nuurra maindagu  
 naruiagu nurna paniru juulunkuralagu  
 naruwarra kurdurduwarra ngungu wirdimanna  
 naruwarra kurdurduwarra "kuuarri" ngarregu.  
 pauinkuura marnda pannegu Thaliana ngadu  
 pauinkuura marnda pannegu juuluwarikuru  
 maralga migurr kalbana kurabina  
 maralga migurr kalbana warndimalurungu



walking this dry country  
 determined to cross the desert  
 through the sand dunes  
 my heart is tight  
 through the sand dunes  
 my heart is gripped in the moment  
 a steep mountain lies there, my Thaliana  
 steep mountain rising with sheer cliffs  
 a jealous spirit stands there  
 against the stranger  
 a jealous maralga  
 with his deadly tail

Jawi in Ngarluma by Tjinapi





Barrarurru (Robert Churnside) & Yinbirrba (Long Mack), Croydon Station  
(John Stickney)

## CATTLE\*

karnakarnamalangu ngunna  
panangarri wirriialagu  
mungun~karrinagu ngunnathalgulba  
karnakarnamalangu ngunna  
kumburr parndinagu  
millarrelagu

imagine  
the play of horns in a herd  
and then this: cattle swarming like ants  
imagine  
the smell of piss  
on the dusty ground

Jawi in Gariyarra by Alec

## STATION WORK

As more families were packed into Roebourne Native Reserve, the only people still living on tribal country were station workers. All through the 1930s, 40s and 50s squatters still depended on our cheap labour. Our families lived in humpies and shacks around the station and worked as saddlers, horse breakers, cooks, stockmen, cleaners, child minders, gardeners, fencers, builders, windmill fixers, well diggers and at many other jobs.

"Most of the men and women who worked for the station are dead now. They made nothing. Only clothes, tobacco, cigarette paper, matches, food rations, stockman hat, stockman boots, that's all they used to get. Never made money." (Tim Kerr)

Some squatters might have been better to work for than others, but we always felt used, and with the ones that got rough, our elders would only take so much. Sometimes they just walked off the station, or our Marban men had their own ways of getting even. They would work sacred thalu sites to bring droughts or floods, breed dingoes to kill their stock or just take them on in a fist fight.

Even with all the hardships, some people today remember their time on the station as the good old days. Never mind they weren't treated as equal, memories of the worst years faded as conditions on the station slowly got better and life settled into a working relationship with the squatters. In those days our children grew up learning the skills of station work.

These last years on the stations were the most settled since Wajbala first came a hundred years before. One of the best things about being on the stations was that our Elders could stay close to the country, look after our sacred places and 'pass on' country to the next generation. But the biggest reward went to the squatters who in good seasons made a lot of money on our backs and who in bad, would not have stayed in business without the skills of our stockmen.



Workers & families, Croydon Station  
(John Stickney)



Breaking horses, Croydon Station  
(John Stickney)



After World War II the number of our people working and living on the stations steadily declined. Then in the late 1960's, after generations of working for the squatter bosses and with nothing to show for our work but old stockman's injuries, most of our families were told there was no place for them on the station any more.

You see, the Government told squatters they had to pay us award wages, the same rate as white workers, but squatters said they could not afford to pay proper wages, so all but a handful of families had to pack their bags. They joined the others in the Roebourne Native Reserve.

We still feel the loss of being pushed off the country where our families grew up and worked most of their lives. It was a stab in the back.

On the Roebourne Reserve our people were institutionalised as the police and the Department of Native Welfare moved in to control much of our lives, and the number of people camping there grew so fast that it became badly overcrowded and dangerous.

Over the past 18 months 11 small children have died on the reserve. Over 50% due to unsatisfactory living conditions. How any of those children survive appears remarkable compared to our living standards. <sup>[11]</sup>

Reginald John Bond, Under-secretary of Public Works, 1954



Yindjibarndi elders, Karri Monadee (Garrimba) and Yali King, revisiting Millstream Out-station Jindina where they used to work (Frank Rijavec)



Old Wally (Bugurman), Yindjibarndi elder (J.B. Quealy)



Jingaloo (Old Charlie), Croydon Station (John Stickney)

## GOODBYE, MUNDABULLANGANA\*

gudbayi Marndabulangana yardiyirdigaba  
 gantharragu wanthanlangu wardiyaju  
 wanalba ngayu  
 nhumbayirla thurdijina  
 gudbayi Marndabulangana yardiyirdigaba  
 gantharragu wanthanlangu wardiyaju  
 wanalba ngayu  
 nhumbayirla thurdijina

bugankarri warnda  
 nyindinyindi Gargurrigala yirdidingu  
 yurruwarnkana  
 galayinda ngarri  
 bugankarri warnda  
 nyindinyindi Gargurrigala yirdidingu  
 yurruwarnkana  
 galayinda ngarri



goodbye Marndabulangana Station  
 I am leaving this country now

travelling east  
 it's so long since I have been home  
 dead trees stand there  
 a big stand of trees in the Yule River  
 on wet ground  
 leaves stirring  
 around the pool that always remains  
 Jawi in Gariyarra by Maabin



Until 1944 we were not counted as Australian citizens, then a new law allowed a few 'half castes' to apply for a special certificate of citizenship. Each man had to get three white referees and satisfy a magistrate that for two years he had cut off all contact with his tribe except for immediate family. If a man passed the test he was no longer classed as an Aborigine and was promised the same rights that other Australian citizens enjoyed. We called these 'dog licences'.

Our relatives on the reserve who were lucky enough to get jobs in Roebourne were loading and carting asbestos from Wittenoom, trapping dingoes, or working as yardmen, linesmen, butchers and odd jobs men, and women found work washing clothes, minding children and cleaning for white families around town.

But at the beginning of the hot season, working people got some time off, and everyone would dress up and go to the Roebourne races, where families that had been split up between stations, town and the reserve could meet up with each other. They also planned Law ceremonies for the months ahead.

In those days, back on the old Reserve, no matter how much our people were moved around or humbugged by Native Welfare and police, our Elders kept the Law strong. Many men who had 'dog licences' didn't take any notice of the special citizenship regulations which tried to stop them mixing with the reserve men, they would risk losing their citizenship by joining in our Birdarra Law anyway



Wijba (Illimburru or Gerry Jerrold), and the shack he built on Roebourne Reserve (David Stevens)

## RACEHORSES\*

thalu ngarli wantharna yirdinygarra  
gurdungurdun wirrarda thanggarnmarri



our station horses lined up at the start  
my heart racing  
fearful, tremulous

Jalurra in Yindjibarndi by Robert Churnside



Jiliwi (Johnny Walker) with his Certificate of Citizenship  
(Frank Rijavec)



Molly Fishook (Burruwayi) holding Mary Quealy (J.B. Quealy)





Teenagers from the Aboriginal school (J.B. Quealy)



Birdarra Law on the Roebourne Reserve (David Stevens)



Station workers visiting Roebourne (Ron Hold)

For many years our elders, led by Old Tumbler (Warlaburu), asked the government to let our children go to school, but the white people in Roebourne were dead against any move to let children from the reserve into the state school. After a long hard fight the government gave us our own school in the early 1950s, but it was segregated, we were separated from the whites. Among the white people in town there were always a few like the local policeman, Bill Motherway, who would fight the racism.



Children from the Aboriginal school - Note truck loaded with asbestos behind (J.B. Quealy)

On one occasion he'd [Bill Motherway] acted as Father Christmas for the white school and on the following night carried out the same service for the native children, with the result that he was severely taken to task by the Parent's & Citizen's Association for using their costume for the native function.<sup>[12]</sup>

Bill Rourke, Inspector of Schools

"We were all one people, you know, we were all caring for one another, just working together as a community in the best way we could. That's what helped us survive through the worst years of reserve life. And then our world turned upside down again." (Roger Solomon)



Aboriginal school and the white school - they were segregated (J.B. Quealy)



## POLICE, PUB AND WELFARE

In the mid-1960s iron-ore development boomed in our tribal lands and new mining towns grew up over night. Thousands of single men flooded in to build the railways and towns for Hamersley Iron, but Roebourne was not ready for the boom and couldn't cope with it. There were more construction workers living in Roebourne's caravan parks than in the town itself, and after work hundreds of them came to town to let off steam in the pub. Our community just fell apart, everything fell apart.

When the new towns were built, government depots and the jobs these gave to our people were moved out of Roebourne to the new provincial capital, Karratha - "Police, pub and welfare, that's all we got left here." (Alice Smith)

The dreadful effects of mining development were made worse when, in 1967, the government gave every Aborigine in Australia full citizenship rights. We called them drinking rights because for the first time in our history everyone had the right to buy and drink grog.

The 1960s mining boom was a lot like the pearling boom a century earlier, because both booms brought an influx of single white men and grog, violated our women and filled the jail with our people. The difference was that while pearling made us slaves, mining left us out of the work force.

In 1971, in the middle of the Robe River iron development, a few of our Elders got the Pilbara Aboriginal Church going down on the Old Reserve. The church helped many of our people to cope with the troubles, to get off the grog and stay off. Some men that stopped drinking became leaders in the church. The same men continued to be very important in keeping our Law going.



Pilbara Aboriginal Church meeting, Old Reserve circa 1972  
(David Stevens)



Lilla Snowball, Jijili (Alan Jacob), Leanne Alan, Sylvie Alan  
(David Stevens)

## DEVELOPMENT\*

margadu pannegu warnagagu jurdujurdumalgu  
railwayline waranba ngarri, pilamanula !  
Pilbara Marndangullangana ngarri, pilamanula  
tyurulgatyririjaba jurlga thumbu manarralaba  
walanmalgu Karrarnnyingu.



there he sits bald as a fig  
and tells us that railway lines will run everywhere,  
liar !

through Pilbara near Warden's Pool, liar !  
no brains, no hair  
he'll find sand to wipe his arse there  
the big-shot from Perth

Jawi in Gariyarra/Ngarluma by Tjabi

I believe, bad and all as it is, that the greed of capitalism  
is the only driving force that there is. <sup>[13]</sup>

Lang Hancock, 1971, Western Australia's most infamous  
mining millionaire

We felt that the time had come for some positive action  
to be taken to develop minerals, to develop something  
that would put people up there, where you could have  
better standards of education, better health care, better  
cultural, better recreational facilities, better transport in  
fact better everything, because this was a very vulnerable  
part of Australia. It was unbelievable that a country like  
ours, as rich as we are, could have all this area virtually  
unpopulated. <sup>[14]</sup>

Sir Charles Court, Former Premier, Western Australia

Presenter: "The Victoria Hotel eighteen months ago  
employed three people behind the bar and struggled to  
sell forty barrels of beer a week. Now it has fifteen full  
time bar staff and its bulk beer sales put it among the  
top five hotels in the state".

Interviewer: "Obviously from a business point of view the  
boom has been a good thing".

Publican: "Oh. yes".

Interviewer: "But from the town's point of view, has it  
been ?".

Publican: "Well it must be because... well business is  
business".

This Day Tonight, ABC-TV, 1972



## ALWAYS CHAINS

In 1975 the Old Reserve was closed and our people were told to move again, this time to the Village - a cluster of state houses around the town's cemetery.

At least twenty five families from the Reserve told the government they didn't want to crowd into the state housing village. They wanted to live in smaller family groups out in tribal country. The government didn't listen. They just said, we've built you some houses and we want you to live there now, next to the cemetery. We never believed in living so close to where our people were buried.

Living arrangements on the old Reserve were organised around tribal and family groupings. In the new Village people were put anywhere, so that family groups were split up into houses all over the place. You know, leadership was very hard in the Old Reserve after drinking rights, but now it was broken down altogether. What was left of our discipline and respect system on the Reserve just went to pieces in the Village.

The teenagers who had grown up under the pressure of mining development and the early years of drinking rights, were confused and angry, and getting into more and more trouble with the police. Many teenagers lost their lives during those first ten years in the Village.

All the government promises of the benefits mining development would bring to everyone in the Pilbara never seemed to reach us, but we were given more police, a new prison and a dam.

While we battle to keep our culture for our children, our tribal country, the root of our culture, is being changed forever. In 1984 construction of the Harding River Dam destroyed Yawajuna (Lockyer's Gorge), a beautiful valley of pools and paper barks. Seeing the Bunggarliyarra rain making site and 'Tree in the moon'(Nganirrira) site drowned at Yawajuna came as a heavy blow to the spirit of our elders. The community also grieved the loss of the its favourite camping place and the drying-up of the Ngurin River downstream of the dam, on Roebourne's doorstep.

Today we are facing another disaster at Jirndawurrina (Millstream), the yinda (permanent pool) where Barrimirndi sleeps. The shallow-rooted paperbarks around this oasis have been dying and falling over ever since government bores started pumping more and more water to the new mining towns on the coast. Since the development of the Harding Dam and Millstream bore-fields, Barrimirndi for those water places has laid down, quiet and sulky. Barrimirndi's feelings have been hurt and he no longer brings the summer and winter rains like he used to. Our people have no more rights at Millstream and the Harding Dam than tourists. If we don't get proper rights in our homeland we will never be able to protect our sacred places.



Some of Roebourne's young men in the new Regional Prison with Roger Solomon [Cntr], narrator of the documentary EXILE AND THE KINGOM (Frank Rijavec)

The Dam: "They insulted this ground. Finish! They've broken it up. Finish! This one here, they break this one too ... the Tree in the Moon, they cut that down, not allowed to do that, Minkala (God) put that tree there... That's the place we used to camp. Everything's busted up. We used to walk down there, up the river. Can't do nothing now. Finished." (Lilla Snowball)



Lilla Snowball, on the Harding Dam (Frank Rijavec)





Bijin (Kenny Jerrold), Yindjibarndi Elder with Willie James, Jack Coppin, Janie May Alan (The West Australian)



Village mothers - Violet Samson, Trisha Edgar, Pansy Hicks (Frank Rijavec)

The enormous wealth of our resource-rich country has not been shared in a fair way. We are forever fighting attitudes that dispute our rights as the first people. We have to beg for every concession while neighbouring towns and industry have been given every advantage. Most of our young people cannot compete for the good jobs, or with the mentality that considers us incapable. So today we are still carrying the social problems and inequalities that have historically been thrust upon our people - the lack of opportunity and respect, poverty, injustice, racism, unemployment, social dysfunction, early death, lack of medical attention, an education system that doesn't cater for our own history and culture. In too many cases this weight has been more than we can bear and has resulted in alcoholism, frustration, resentment, violence, abuse - an Australia that is divided between black and white. Many people have simply said that it is all too hard.

We don't want our kids to go down the same hard road past generations did. So it is time we started setting our own agendas rather than choking on what's dished up. We can fix the problems if we are allowed proper resources instead of mean handouts on a drip-feed basis.

The battle for rights to, and control of, traditional lands which are the foundation of our Law and culture, and which will give us a real chance for independence in the future, is a priority for us today. "I just want to bring these young people back to this land, I want to show them this land is still good for them to use. And young people when they come back, they might do a job in this place and learn in their way to handle a business. They might find out happiness, happiness for their life, and see what good things are in this land." (Yilbie Warrie).



Namu (Lionel Samson)  
(Frank Rijavec)

Today, over 140 years after the Wajbala invasion, we might be exiled from the best of our country, and yes, there have been times when we have battled to keep our Law, but the yearly gathering of families for our Birdarra Law shows that our culture holds today as it did through the worst of colonisation. Our Tribal Law is written in the country and it is this Law and this land that tells us who we are, that gives us strength for the struggle ahead, just as it gave strength to our ancestors. "We want Birdarra Law to stand. We want to teach our kids, that's all." (Alan Jacob)

Our lonely country is waiting for us to come home





Woodley King, Yindjibarndi elder at the Jirdha, increase site for flour (Colin Beard)

### GAMBULANHA SONG

mangga warrurninyba wawardu ngarri Gambulanha lawangga birndirri  
mardamardarri  
mangga warrurninyba wawardu ngarri Gambulanha lawangga birndirri  
mardamardarri

birndirri mardamardarri  
Jirdangga marndagu wangga bayimarri binkariwa birdi Tharamarrala  
Jirdangga marndagu wangga bayimarri binkariwa birdi Tharamarrala

birdi Tharamarrala  
murli ngayinygarra mirli warndurarri garrwiri jirdanggarra yirna Barnarrarala  
murli ngayinygarra mirli warndurarri garrwiri jirdanggarra yirna Barnarrarala

yirna Barnarrarala  
yindilirri ngurra wirluwirli ngarri malu bunggamara Thardiwarngu yindimala  
yindilirri ngurra wirluwirli ngarri malu bunggamara Thardiwarngu yindimala

Thardiwarngu yindimala  
nguriraragi Jimawurrada nawa yidimilbidila ganggurnji wangga  
nguriraragi Jimawurrada nawa yidimilbidila ganggurnji wangga

dila ganggurnji wangga  
Yaralarna warnku wanbina wuragurdu ngurndirri warradila marnda malumalu  
Yaralarna warnku wanbina wuragurdu ngurndirri warradila marnda malumalu

marnda malumalu  
waralanhibarlu Bangarru yirrawirdi barni malura ngurra wunggurlinybala  
waralanhibarlu Bangarru yirrawirdi barni malura ngurra wunggurlinybala

like the moon in its halo -  
nesting in a dark cloud  
I travel over Gambulanha (Hamersley Ranges)  
under the stars of a red sky  
at Jirdangga two spirit travelers argue and wrestle -  
I steal their songs, their racket stops  
twisting and circling through the sky  
I take flight from the trap in the hill of cries  
Skipping from one hill to the next, all in a line  
until the way spreads out  
to Barnarrarala Hill  
soft and shimmering like a heat haze...  
I set down on the ground, I rest...  
a shadow falling across Thardiwarngu Pool  
coming down from up on high  
circling around Jimawurrada Hill  
I see the half-circle markings of the kangkurnji bird  
who calls  
I come around the bend at Yaralarnha Station  
and hit the ground  
from flat country to hill, shadow climbing  
and falling over Bangarru  
there between twin peaks  
cloud shadow resting  
I take shelter in the shaded gorge

Jawi in Yindjibarndi by Toby Wiliguru Bambardu

Biographical note: Toby Wiliguru Bambardu ("the blind") died in 1934. He was the greatest master of Tabi-making in the Pilbara in the twentieth century. Blind since boyhood, he strove to overcome his handicap, and developed his talents to such a degree that he reached the highest possible standards, and a rare perfection in song-making. Later, Yindjibarndi elder Yilbie Warrie became the main custodian for Bambardu's songs. <sup>[15]</sup>





Liverman (Jack Fishook), dancing the Swagman Corroboree (David Stevens)

## GALTHARRA

Every man and woman in the community belong to one of four Galharra groups - Banaga, Burungu, Balyirri or Garimarra.

A lot of business in the community follows people's Galharra relationship to one another. Take our Birdarra Law ceremony for example, it is run by strict rules which guide everyone in the part they have to play during the ceremony. Each person understands their job by knowing their Galharra relationship to the boy going through the Law.

Our Galharra is the most important part of the Law passed to us by the Marrga during the learning times.

A baby's Galharra is decided by the Galharra of his or her parents and according to the Law there are special rules of marriage between Galharra groups.

A Banaga man must marry a Burungu woman and all their children are Balyirri. A Burungu man marries a Banaga woman and their children are Garimarra.

On the other side, Garimarra men must marry Balyirri women and their children are Burungu. Balyirri men marry Garimarra women and their children become Banaga.

All things in the world have Galharra - plants, animals, the sun, rain, wind, all sacred sites and permanent pools, all belong to one of the four Galharra groups, and so they are in relationship to us in the same way as an uncle, cousin or parent.

Through Galharra relationships our community is one big extended family with clear rules of respect and discipline. Just by knowing your Galharra people know how to relate to you, they can work out whether you are brother, auntie, cousin, nephew or whatever. If you don't know your Galharra, then you'd be lost wherever you go.



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Yilbie Warrie, Alan Jacob, Karri Monadee, Ned Cheedy, Cherrie Cheedy, Bridget Warrie, Dora Solomon, Iddi Whalebone, Michael Woodley, Lorraine Coppin, Trevor Solomon, Ken Sandy, Alan Dench (Centre For Linguistics, UWA), Frank Rijavec, Albert Burgman.

Note: Some transcriptions do not include the repetition of lines or phrases. None of the transcriptions include sounds which are part of an individual's interpretation of the song (the 'sweeteners') but have no meaning of their own. Three songs – "Cattle", "The Jealous Maralga", and "Development" – retain the language transcription of the first edition and are based on texts published in: TARURU, Aboriginal Song Poetry from the Pilbara, C.G. von Brandenstein & A.P. Thomas (1974). Translations marked with an asterisk (\*) were based on sound recordings made by linguist Carl Georg von Brandenstein.

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Inside cover: View towards Pyramid Hill - John Patterson

Background, Page 1: Jirndawurrina (Millstream), where Barrimirndi the water~snake rests - John Patterson

Background, Page 7: Kiarnardee, prisoner, Roebourne jail - Battye Library, C.H. Powell Collection 3007P

Background, Page 19: Jirda, increase site for flour - Colin Beard

Background, Page 20: Sunset - John Patterson.

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In Perth to celebrate the premiere of the documentary EXILE AND THE KINGDOM (Bob Hart)



Croydon station families - Ngarluma country, late 1960s (John Stickney)



In the beginning Creation beings lifted the soft world out of the sea.  
Then the earth became hard... Colonisation, slavery, mining booms...  
This is the story of the indomitable spirit of the Aboriginal people  
of Roebourne... their Law, their tribal voice



Poster artwork: Tania FERRIER

## EXILE AND THE KINGDOM

Feature documentary (110 minutes) made with the YINDJIBARNDI,  
NGARLUMA, BANYJIMA and GURRAMA people of Roebourne, Western Australia

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**EXILE AND THE KINGDOM** is an account of the history and culture of the tribes gathered in Roebourne from pre-colonial time to the present.

The film argues that the relentless removal of the Yindjibarndi/Ngarluma people into coastal ghettos has led to the community's current problems. However, as the film moves us through the period of British colonisation, unearthing appalling facts about slavery and the violent rule of pearling and pastoral overlords, to the excesses of the 1960s mining boom and problems with alcohol, it never allows the viewer to forget the significance and influence of spiritual homelands, the bedrock upon which Yindjibarndi/Ngarluma tribal Law is based. Above all Exile and The Kingdom is a beautifully logical and persuasive argument for land rights.

Using a poetic mix of testimony, historical re-creation, compelling argument, creation story and song, the film never deviates from its intention to let the tribal people tell their own story. It makes the connection between Aborigines in chains in the nineteenth century and Aborigines in prisons today so providing a deeper understanding of how the abuses and denials of the past inform the present. Ultimately, it gives conviction that with their extraordinary resilience, the indigenous peoples of Australia will survive and flourish.

Awards received by **EXILE AND THE KINGDOM**:

MAJOR MEDIA PEACE AWARD, United Nations Association of Australia, 1993.  
BEST DOCUMENTARY & BEST ACHIEVEMENT IN SOUND, Australian Film Institute Awards, 1993.  
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