

History Happening in/between Body and Place: Journey to the Aboriginal Way of Historical Practice

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I. Introduction

(a) Main theme

Drawing upon field research with the Gurindji people of Daguragu and Kalkaringi in Northern Territory, my project challenges the mainstream academic monopoly over Australian historical studies by validating the alternative historical practices of Indigenous Australians. The conventional practice of academic history, which is based on time-oriented chronology, teleology, and historicity, is only one mode of exploring the past. This paper explores the Gurindji way of historical practices which are characterised by body/place-oriented stories framed according to the logic of their own ontology and cosmology, or cultural mode of being.

However, my project is inevitably full of contradictions. How can I - a Japanese PhD candidate - perform Gurindji historical practice *within* contemporary academic discourse? A Japanese performs Gurindji history? Gurindji history within academic framework? My work is based on contradictions. However, I still persist with my seemingly contradictory project - to learn and share the Gurindji mode of historical practice as a cross-cultural historian.

(b) Background

Before I begin my discussion, I shall sketch some background details of the Gurindji country and the Daguragu and Kalkaringi communities within which my discussion of Gurindji history is situated. The Gurindji country is located in the upper reaches of the Victoria River. The landscape varies from hilly sandstone to grassland plains and scrubland. Although there are several large permanent water holes which provide year-round swimming and fishing, the climate keeps a seasonal wet-dry cycle (Australia 1982, p.3).

The term Gurindji refers to the Gurindji language and to the speakers of the language. Daguragu community is located within the Gurindji country at the basin of Wattie Creek, a tributary of the Victoria River, and Kalkaringi community is 10km south of Daguragu. The total population of the two Gurindji communities is about 600. As with most of the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and the Kimberleys of Western Australia, the Gurindji has an eight subsection system and moieties as kinship-social categorisation (McConvell and Hagen 1981, pp.20-31). This kinship system affects their social relationships in many spheres such as economic activities, rituals, marriage, educational and politics (Bourke and Edwards 1994, p.105).

After European colonisation, many Gurindji people worked at Wave Hill station as stock workers. In 1966 the Gurindji people walked off the European property and in 1975 after years of struggle succeeded in having their country returned. This episode gained the public attention of contemporary Australia, and remains an event that is deeply engraved on the memories of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people,

particularly in terms of the Aboriginal land rights movement. Therefore, Daguragu can be regarded as highly politicized community.

This paper is a product of my engagement with and understanding of the concept of 'history' among the Gurindji people. Strictly speaking, my aim in this paper is not to perform Gurindji history, but to search for the possibility of cross-cultural historical practice. Even though it seems that I am discussing the difference between academic and Gurindji historical practices, my purpose is not to dichotomise 'our history' and 'their history'. Instead, the goal of this paper is to set up a dialogue and negotiation between two historical practices in order to share the ways of constructing the past.

II. Body: Paying Attention to the History

(a) Your body for paying attention to the world

Let me start with how to use one's body to practise Gurindji history. The Gurindji people, especially the elders, often sit on the ground and do nothing for a long time. I thought they were doing nothing. If there is no ceremony or urgent meeting, they will often spend all day apparently doing nothing.

What are they doing while sitting on the ground and being still?

It took me a while to realise that they were actually 'seeing', 'listening', and 'feeling'. If you want to know what is happening in this world, you should stay still and pay attention to the world. Be aware of what is happening around you. Do not make your own 'noise' which often fogs your senses.

The Gurindji elders did not teach me in the way I wrote above. Instead, when I sat next to them they told me what they saw and heard. They told me, for example, you could see the thick cloud over the hill so that it would rain soon, you could hear fighting happening on the other side of the community, maybe grog or jealous business. You hear an aeroplane coming in this direction, so it may be a mail plane. Of course, I could see and hear as they did, but I did not 'pay attention' to such things. I am often preoccupied by my own work, thoughts, or schedule so that sitting down and being still meant doing nothing to me.

The idea I learned was: do not use your body and senses to look for something. Instead, something comes to you if you are quiet enough to take notice. I usually try to understand the world by asking and searching. However, Gurindji people demonstrated to me how to know the world by simply being still and paying attention.

The art of knowing is not always the way of searching, but often the way of paying attention.

In fact, this way of using your senses is not only when you are sitting, but also while making your body move. Paying attention to the world happens even more strongly while moving around the country. Gurindji people listen and see very carefully and tell each other what is happening around them while they are moving. They see and listen, then report and share their findings with each other.

Your body is the essential medium to know the world. It does not matter if you are sitting, standing, or moving. Pay more attention to the world around you and use your senses to receive the information from the world.

(b) Your body for practising history

Paying attention is also essential when the Gurindji people practise their history. Paying attention to the world means not only knowing what is happening, but also remembering what happened here and there. They do not search for history as academic historians do. Instead, they *pay attention* to their history. History often comes to you if you are alert enough to notice it. You can see, listen and feel the history around yourself only if you are sensitive enough to know it.

When I say taking notice of the history around yourself, I am not mystifying or romanticising the Gurindji way of historical practice. I am simply emphasising that, for the Gurindji people, history is not a subject that you ‘choose’ to learn. Instead, history is happening everywhere in their everyday life. For instance, you drive a car to visit your family in another community and see that hill, and you remember (or you hear the elder's teachings or discussion) that Aboriginal people were killed there by ‘white fella’ in the early days. You are fishing in this waterhole and you remember (or are told) that this old man’s father dived underwater here and asked the rainbow snake to make a big rain. That’s how old Wave Hill station was washed away. You see drunken people fighting each other and you remember (and discuss) how and why grog was introduced to the Gurindji country. When someone ‘stole’ this old man’s promised wife, old men are grumbling that Aboriginal law was ‘more hard’ when they were young.

History should be listened to, seen and felt around yourself in your everyday life. History is something your body can sense, remember and practise.

The body is also essential when you express history. Story telling is often communicated by one’s body actions. Body action is part of their memories of the past. How the white fella shot the Aboriginal people, how the Aboriginal people speared the kangaroo before using rifle, how the people used to be chained at the police station. These stories were all performed through the physical actions. In addition, the Gurindji people often drew diagrams on the ground to explain their history. They also used stones, trees, seeds, fish, kangaroos, rivers, hills, billabongs, rain, clouds, sun, hands, heads, faces, spears, boomerangs, nulla-nulla, hats, cars, rifles and many other objects to express their history.

For the Gurindji people, all bodies, objects and landscapes contain memories. Therefore, historical practice should not be only words, but also visual expression.

The body is essential for practising Gurindji history. You see the history. You listen to the history. Your body senses and feels the history. You use your body by listening, seeing, visiting, performing, sharing, sitting, moving, and interacting. The Gurindji historians demonstrated to me that historical practice is, at least partly, a bodily work. It is a lived experience.

III. The World: History of Maintenance

Let us shift our focus from the body to the ‘space’ in which our body is unavoidably located. I have already emphasised how to use one’s body to pay attention to the world, but I have not yet explored what the world is like in the Gurindji cosmology.

(a) What’s in the world?

According to the Gurindji people, the world is full of life. There are many living beings, especially in the bush. Apart from plants and animals, there are, for example, *kaya* (ghosts) living in the cave that come out at night and kill you and steal the meat from your campsite. *Mungamunga* in the bush and *karrkan* in the water are both beautiful

women who seduce men and sleep with them. *Munba* (Bush blackfella) are dangerous people. They live in the bush and envy the Aboriginal people living in the community. Dead people's spirits are often around too. They may help and protect you, but you should be careful because they can also be *kaya*. As I will discuss soon, Dreaming or ancestral beings are all alive in the world too. They include stones, hills, rivers, waterholes, rainbows as well as animals, insects and plants (Rose 1996, pp.23-33) .

What is probably more important is that the earth itself is alive too. Jimmy Mangayarri, a very old man in Daguragu, told me this. He picked up a handful of sand and taught me that you may think this *janja* (soil) was just soil, but this was a 'man'. He also said the Earth tells you the Right Way. Furthermore, one of Old Jimmy's favourite sayings is, "Don't matter what it is, everything come out longa this earth." You may find similar explanations in other ethnographies. For example, an Aboriginal person in the Kimberley told Erich Kolig that the ground is like 'a huge battery' that maintains life. You can 're-charge' this battery by practising rituals (1987, p.128). The world is full of life. Moreover, every living being comes from the earth which is also alive. In this sense, one may say the world is alive.

However, what is it really meant by 'the world is alive'? How is it possible? Up until this point, we understand that the world is alive, but we have not learned how and why yet. These questions would not be answered without understanding the creation and maintenance of this world: welcome to the world of Dreaming.

(b) Dreaming-1: Origin of the world

When Old Jimmy said that everything comes from the earth, I understood that everything was created and has been maintained by the earth. I understood this 'earth' as the most general or abstract idea of Dreaming.

The earth, or in a sense, 'place' is neither a conceptual nor non-organic space in which every being exists and lives. Instead, place is the origin, cause and reason of every life and its existence. To describe this, Old Jimmy often uses the following five different words: Earth, Dreaming, Law, 'Right Way' and History.

At first glance, these words seem to explain the sequence of the world's creation: 'Earth' was there first. Then, 'Dreaming' came out to shape the place and other beings. Dreaming also made the 'Law' for this created world so that we can maintain it by following and practising the Law. Instead of Law, Old Jimmy sometimes uses the word 'Right Way' referring to the Dreaming 'track' as well as ethical behaviour. Eventually, this became the 'History' of the world.

However, Old Jimmy's teaching is not really as simple as this, because Earth, Dreaming, Law, 'Right Way' and History are also interchangeable to one another. For instance, when Dreaming shaped that hill and made Law, the hill became the Law itself. In general, the landscape is not just the product of Dreaming, but is itself Dreaming. In the same way, Dreaming did not just create the Law - Dreaming is the Law. Logically, since Dreaming itself is Law, a place becomes the Law as well.

This concept of 'Law' is of fundamental importance when one discusses the Gurindji moral philosophy. Billy Bunter, another elder of Daguragu, often told me that "Our law is this hill, that river" so that nobody can change the law. Law does not only come from the Earth, but Law is the Earth. For the Gurindji people, Law is tangible, visible and physical. Landscape is Dreaming, therefore, landscape is Law. To sum up, Gurindji's landscape is Earth, Dreaming, and Law.

However, once again, what is the relationship among them? How could it be possible that Earth, Dreaming and Law are identical? At this point, I would like to remind you of another of Old Jimmy's terms; 'Right Way'. Using this word, Old Jimmy teaches us it is an issue of morality. 'Right Way' is a geographical Dreaming track *as well as* an ethical behaviour. In Gurindji philosophy, the 'Right Way' or morality does not include the physical/metaphysical separation. 'Right Way' is a geographical landscape as well as human behaviour. Morality is spatial as well as behavioural. The Earth, Dreaming and Law are identical because all of these have the same essential quality, namely, the 'Right Way' or the morality of the world.

Accordingly, another question naturally arises: why is the Dreaming landscape moral? What is the ethical activity? Or more generally, what does 'morality' mean in the Gurindji country? These new questions shift our attention from the origin of the world to the way of maintaining the world.

(c) Dreaming-2: History of maintaining the world

Dreaming story tells you not only about the origin of the world, but also how the world has been maintained. The world has been moral because Dreaming came out of the Earth not only for creating but also for maintaining the world.

Now it has become clearer why Earth or Dreaming is 'Law'. This is because Dreaming teaches us how to look after this created world. The Gurindji people have been a part of the moral history because they have been participating in sustaining the world by following the Dreaming, or the 'Right Way'. Moral behaviour is an attitude which contributes to sustaining the world. Ritual practice is a typical example. Visiting your country and communicating with your country or ancestral beings is also an important practice for maintaining the world.

At the same time, you should find physical evidence - visible memories - that shows the world is maintaining its morality. That hill is there, and this river is here. This Dreaming rock is here and that Dreaming waterhole is still there. The rainbow snake is active in making big rain in seasonal cycle. These are all visible memories of the world's creation as well as the evidence that the 'morality' of Dreaming has been maintained. In fact, such memories themselves are 'visible morality' because if these objects and landscape are broken, the world loses its morality.

This is the 'History' of the moral world. This is history because this is how the world has been maintained. Landscape is history because it contains visible memories and evidence that the world has been maintained. The Gurindji people are also part of moral history because they hold their memories of world's creation, thus, they are the evidence that the world has been maintained.

Earth, Dreaming, 'Right Way' and Law are the origin of the world and the History of maintaining the world. Dreaming is the moral history. Landscape is the moral history. Gurindji people are the moral history. You can see, listen, touch and feel the history through your physical interaction with memories of the places. In other words, the moral history can always occur everywhere as long as both place and you are part of it.

Now, I need to shift our focus to the relation between the body and the world. Or more precisely, one's positioning in the history of the moral world. I will explore two key issues: mobility and knowledge. At first glance, these are totally different problems: movement is a physical matter and knowledge is a metaphysical issue. However, in my

understanding, the relationship between their mobility and epistemology is fundamental to exploring the conditions of the Gurindji historical practice.

IV. Movement: Its Function and Ethics

(a) Why are they nomadic? (Or how do they move?)

When I was at Daguragu, I was amazed by how frequently people moved. Some were away for a couple of weeks visiting their relatives, some had gone to Darwin and nobody knew if they would ever come back. Visiting other communities for ceremony is as usual as doing ceremony in your own community. Even staying in the community, people love to go bush, hunting, fishing, swimming or, even just moving around their country.

It is of no doubt that Gurindji people were and, in many aspects still are, nomadic. But do we know why? Anthropologists used to explain Aboriginal mobility by economic necessity. A hunting and gathering economy is possible only by constantly moving your camping sites. However, such an explanation is meaningless to the contemporary Aboriginal mobility because today, you can access enough food within the community.

In fact, I do not need to discuss 'why they move' as answers are often too clear: because they like hunting, because they like bush tucker, because there is ceremony in another community, because a relative is sick in Darwin, because one wants to drink in town, because one gets bored being in the community, and so on.

However, the real question here is not the purpose of their movement, but the process. Our question 'why are they nomadic?' cannot be answered only by asking 'why do they move?' Instead, the real question should be 'how do they move?'

(b) Where is your 'home'?

For a while, I thought they liked travelling as many of us do too. Therefore, I also thought the key to answer 'how do they move' would be 'how do they travel'. However, I realised that their movement is normally not travel at all. Their mobility is not for getting out of their home, but interestingly enough, for living in their 'home'.

For the Gurindji people, 'home' is not a small box called 'house' - which they call 'camp' in Creole. I found the Gurindji people use their house almost like a storeroom. They keep their rifle and few other valuable things in the house, but they spend most of their time outside. Continuing with this analogy, the outside of a house within the community is a kind of 'living room' in which you can eat, play, talk and sleep.

If a house is a 'store room' and the community is a 'living room', what is 'home' for the Gurindji people? By 'home', I mean a place one lives with one's family offering security and happiness. At this stage, my answer is that their home is their country itself. There are so many other 'rooms' you should visit and stay such as 'fishing rooms', 'bush plum rooms', or 'ceremonial rooms', and so on. Therefore, they naturally move around their country because they do not want to stay only in the storeroom and living room all the time. Here, for the time being, the answer is given: the Gurindji people are nomadic not because they are travellers by nature, but because their 'home' is a lot bigger than settlers' small boxes or houses.

However, we also should not forget that the world is alive and full of life in the Gurindji country. Therefore, it is logical to say that their home is not only huge, but also shared space. That being said, the relationship between you and your 'home' cannot be like that between owners and their private property. When you move around your country, whatever your purposes are, you should always be aware that you are

surrounded by your 'home' which is full of life. You are not the owner of your 'home', but a part of it.

This is the key to understanding the meaning of the Gurindji people's movement. As I mentioned before, the question is 'how do they move'. This is because 'why are they nomadic?' can be answered only if we understand 'how do they maintain their country'.

(c) Dreaming-3: Ethics of spatial movement

I have already mentioned that morality in the Gurindji cosmology is related to the way the world is maintained. Ritual practice as well as visiting one's country and communicating with ancestral beings are fundamental activities enacted to sustain the world. Therefore, this is moral behaviour. I would like to emphasise here that such moral behaviour is not possible without movement. In short, mobility is simply essential for the people as well as for the Dreaming to maintain the world. In the Gurindji cosmology, movement occurred at the first stage of the creation: Dreaming created this world by moving around the country.

As the Dreaming has maintained people through its movement, people maintain their Dreaming through their movement as well. In ritual, they follow the Dreaming track through their songs and dances. You should maintain the world through your 'ethical movement' as Dreaming does to you as well. Such an 'ethics of spatial movement' is not only in ritual practice, but is applied in everyday activities as well. In everyday practice, you may not always physically follow the Dreaming track, but it is essential to move around the country in order to relate and connect yourself to the places.

It is your movement that connects you and the world, and its moral history. Movement is the origin of the world, the history of the world, and the morality of the world. After all, it does not always matter what the purpose of one's movement is. Rather, the process (i.e. movement itself) is the reason why they are nomadic.

Up to this stage, we have learned that mobility is the key to connecting the world and yourself. Without ethical movement, there is no maintenance of the world. People and Dreaming sustain the world together through their ethical movement.

Having got to this point, let us move on to a new question: how does this ethics of movement reflect on the Gurindji knowledge system? In other words, what is the relationship between their nomadic lifestyle and their epistemology?

V. Knowledge: The Gurindji Epistemology

(a) A web of connection without a centre

The idea that mobility is the essence of maintaining the world also means you do not have a 'central place' in the world. One of the reasons you have to move around your country is that Dreaming sites are scattered all over the country. There is no 'central sacred site' through which you can maintain the whole country. There is no 'central ceremonial place' where you can 're-charge' the entire world. Therefore, ceremonies should be shared and exchanged between different places.

As anthropological works show, sacred sites are the points that connect Dreaming beings' movement. Dreaming tracks are the lines which connect the countries and people rather than divide them (Strehlow 1970, p.129; Rose 1996, pp.35-47). Therefore, movement becomes a fundamental function since the Gurindji cosmology is based on the networking among many sites, countries and people without a concept of

'the centre'. The world has been maintained through the web of connection between Dreaming beings, people and their countries and ceremonies.

This view of the Gurindji cosmology leads us to the unique positioning of your 'self' in the world. In short, 'self' becomes remarkably relationalised. This happens at least on two different levels.

First of all, your 'self' as a living human cannot be the centre of the world. As already discussed, the Dreaming or ancestral being is as alive as living human beings. Your existence relies on the Dreaming activities, and vice versa. Therefore, your 'self' is not a control agency of the world. Instead, human activities are relationalised by the Dreaming activities. Living people cannot claim themselves as a central figure of the world.

Secondly, your country cannot be the centre among other people and countries. Because Dreaming sites and tracks are always connected with other people and countries, the existence of your 'self' and country is guaranteed only by the interaction with other people and their countries. Therefore, you cannot maintain your country by yourself, but only through the connection with other people and their countries.

To sum up, there is no being which can be the centre of the living world. And, there is no country which can be the centre of all countries. In other words, your 'self' finds its position in the web of connection: the connection with other beings, and other countries.

(b) Open and flexible system of knowledge

As your 'self' is relationalised through the web of connection, knowledge is also relationalised. There is no place where and no person who generates the authentic knowledge spreading it out like radiation from one place to all places. Instead, in the Gurindji information system, knowledge happens anywhere and mobility brings it to everywhere in all directions.

This information system creates a particular manner of maintaining their knowledge. Because there is no authentic centre that guarantees the validity of the information, the knowledge naturally creates many variations through the process of networking. It is quite normal that the different stories which contradict each other, do not conflict, but simply coexist.

The following serves as an example: while I was at Daguragu, a story arrived in the community that a Gurindji person died in Katherine. There were two stories about the cause of death. One story was that she had died because she took too many medical tablets while she was drunk. Another story was that someone had killed her. I could not help trying to find the 'right' story and so I asked people which story they thought was true. However, a typical answer was "I don't know, maybe tablet, maybe she was killed."

I need to remind you that people were not indifferent about the cause of her death. They exchanged the information and discussed why it had happened. However, the discussion was not for finding a single 'right' story, but for exploring the several possibilities of the cause. In this case, maintaining the knowledge did not mean finding a 'right' story but widening the possibilities of stories.

Information of different variations is preferred, pooled and maintained as a bundle of possibilities without judgement. It is an open system because wherever stories come from, whomever stories are brought by, they are regarded equally and pooled without urgent judgement.

The Gurindji knowledge system is not only open but also flexible. It is a flexible system because they choose a story from the pooled possibilities according to the context of your story-tellings. For example, when the person died in Katherine, people said that you should not drink too much when you are under medication. Her death gave people an opportunity to re-realise the grog problem. At the same time, there have been a couple of rumours about who killed her and why. People choose one of the stories which suit your context. Knowledge or pooled stories are always chosen and used according to the context of your story telling.

(c) Temporality and the Gurindji epistemology

Before bringing our discussion back to the conditions of Gurindji history, I would like to further explore the relationship between mobility and epistemology from a different angle: the temporal aspects of their relationship. Three concepts - or functions - of temporality need to be examined: those of 'right time', 'enduring time' and 'spontaneity'

First of all, it cannot be overestimated that the seasonal sense of 'time' is fundamental in hunting and gathering activities. You always need to know the 'right time' to hunt, fish and gather. People always 'pay attention' to their country if the bush plum is ripe, if bush turkeys are around and fat, if rain comes, then lots of fish come back to the river, and so on. Of course, their pooled knowledge also tells the 'right time' when to hunt what, and where to go and how. Furthermore, the 'right time' for their ceremony is also a major concern among the Gurindji people. This is not only the seasonal timing of conducting the ceremony. They also need to discuss and assess which children are in the 'right time' to go through initiation. In a ceremony there is a 'right time' to start singing, dancing, and also 'right time' to stop the ceremony. The Gurindji temporality needs a concept of 'right time' to make a right action.

Secondly, in order to maintain their information system, it is important to spend an enormous amount of time discussing, learning, teaching and sharing. The open and flexible system of knowledge can function well only if people do not rush to make a decision. I do not think there is a concept of 'wasting time' in decision making.

In this sense, the Gurindji knowledge system can be called 'process-oriented' rather than 'outcome-oriented'. Knowledge procedure is as important as the product. People's mobility must be promoted, and then new stories must be exchanged again and again and again. Information should be pooled more and more and more. Discussion and negotiation goes on and on and on. This process of maintaining their knowledge requires 'enduring time'.

Thirdly, I also need to emphasise the importance of 'spontaneity' in the Gurindji temporal structure. Once a decision has been made, action follows immediately. I was often shocked by how quickly the Gurindji people made themselves ready, once they had decided to make a move. People often came to my house and asked if I would like to go hunting with them. When I asked them 'when', the answer was normally 'now'. There is no delay: either now or never.

In fact, people often told me that they would take me to a certain place 'tomorrow' or 'next week'. However, my excitement was often dashed to find them the next morning saying "Oh, maybe tomorrow/next week". I finally got used to this manner of either immediate action or nothing happening.

The reflection above makes clear the temporal aspect of the relationship between the Gurindji epistemology and their mobility. The sense of 'right time', 'enduring time' and

'spontaneity' are all essential to maintaining their activities as well as their knowledge system.

VI. Conclusion: What is Gurindji historical practice?

Let us now return to our original topic about the conditions of the Gurindji history. Here, I would like to explore what is the meaning of (1) movement, (2) an open and flexible system of knowledge, and (3) the three temporal dimensions, in the Gurindji mode of historical practice.

Let me start by emphasising the importance of mobility in their historical practice. As already mentioned in the beginning, history is happening all over the country so that your mobility is essential to physically access history. Furthermore, as I also discussed, mobility creates the unique relationship between your 'self' and the world. You find your 'self' in relation to the web of connection: connection with other beings, other countries and other community members. Naturally, your historical practice becomes relationalised into the web of connection as well. You are not the central figure of a practising history. Nor can you practise the history by yourself. Instead, your historical practice must 'connect' to the places, Dreaming, countries and people. History happens when you visit that hill which contains the memory of people killed by Europeans. History happens when you see the young people using a rifle instead of a spear while hunting. History happens when you realise that the rainbow snake recently rose up again and made floods around the country. Historical practice can be possible only through the interaction between the living world and yourself.

History happens in/between body and place.

Let us shift now to the historical knowledge in terms of the Gurindji's open and flexible system. The Gurindji people maintain their historical knowledge based on its multiplicity. It is natural and preferable to maintain many different versions of a certain event. A storyteller chooses the story from the pooled knowledge according to the context of where, what, and who you are relating to and what you are trying to express.

However, at another level, you can also say that every historical narrative is a new version of the event because your positioning in the networking world is never the same. You are a part of the web of connection, and your mobility always brings you to a new position in this web. Therefore, places and your body connect each other and create histories every time differently in particular contexts.

This process mean that history is always situated. Thus, the Gurindji way of historical practice reflects their open and flexible system on two different levels: (1) pooled and maintained historical knowledge, and (2) situationalised and contextualised historical knowledge

With this in mind, let's turn to the third point. You can now find that the above two aspects of historical knowledge are related to their temporal structure.

First of all, the Gurindji way of historical practice requires a sense of 'right time' and 'spontaneity'. History only happens 'spontaneously' at the 'right time' in the 'right place'. Every historical narrative is a product of a certain connection among storytellers, listeners, other beings or objects and places, so that a particular opportunity does not happen twice. History thus happens 'spontaneously' when the 'right time' comes.

Secondly, you also need 'enduring time' in order to maintain historical knowledge. Since it is not documentary cultural practice, you need the repetition of

story-telling in order to share, remember and maintain historical knowledge. In the same way, places need to be visited repeatedly to maintain the history. In short, historical knowledge can be pooled and maintained only by a never-ending repetition of story-tellings and visiting places.

The Gurindji history does not have an authentic textbook which any one can equally access in any time or in any place. Instead, the Gurindji history happens to particular people, in particular places, at specific times. At the same time, this situated history has been happening repeatedly to anyone, in anywhere, at anytime. In other words, historical knowledge has been created, and is maintained through the web of connection among the people, Dreaming beings, and their countries.

Notes

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