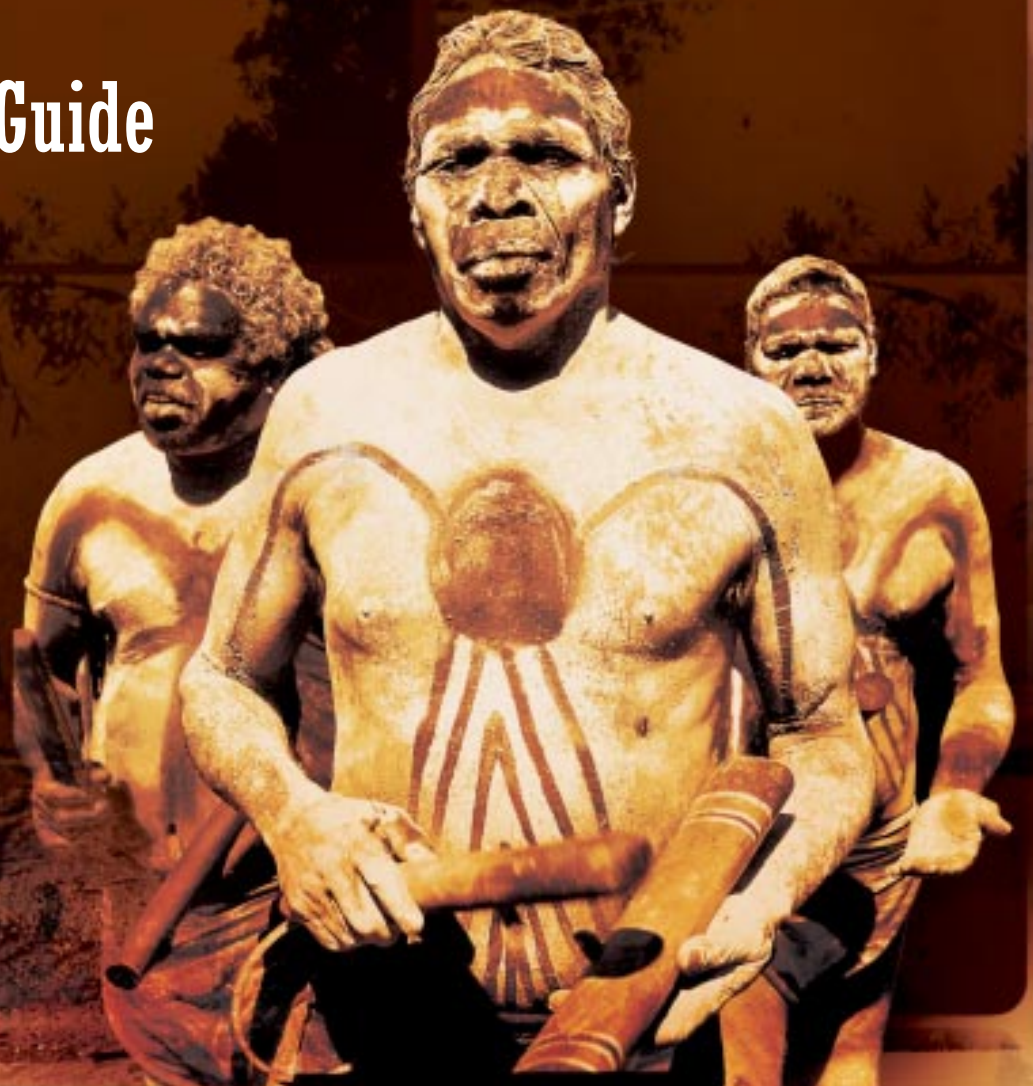


Dhakiyarr vs the King

Study Guide





Synopsis

The family of the great Yolngu leader Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda is searching for answers. Seventy years after his controversial murder trial and subsequent disappearance, Dhakiyarr's body has still not been found and laid to rest. His descendants know that justice was not served. They want to restore what was denied to him: his honour.

This is their story, told in their own words. It is also the story of a clash of cultures, and of one man bravely facing the unknown.

In 1933, on Woodah Island in remote north-east Arnhem Land, Dhakiyarr speared a policeman, Constable McColl, who had chained up his wife. This was Dhakiyarr's land and that was his law. On the advice of missionaries, he went to Darwin to explain his actions and his people's ways to the Northern Territory Supreme Court.

Dhakiyarr vs the King journeys with the Yolngu as they re-trace his footsteps and finally come face to face with the authorities that let him down and with the descendants of Constable McColl.

It is an inspiring story of remembrance and healing—of two laws, two cultures and two families coming to terms with the past.

Curriculum Links

This film will have interest and relevance for students at both secondary and tertiary levels. Curriculum links include Legal Studies, Modern History, Anthropology, Indigenous Studies, English, Drama and Dance, Music, Art and Media Studies.

About This Study Guide

This study guide is arranged into five sections:

1. Before Watching—a series of discussion topics and questions that provides a context for students to begin thinking about issues raised in the film.

2. Yolngu Matha Vocabulary List—provides an insight into Yolngu life and values.

3. After Watching—another series of discussion topics and questions that builds on the earlier group and also addresses specific issues raised by the film.

4. A Brief History of Arnhem Land 1700–2000—provides short passages of information that are relevant in some way to events in *Dhakiyarr vs the King*. It may be useful as a starting point for discussing topics raised in Sections One and Three.

5. References and Further Resources

1. Before Watching

There are a number of ideas that could be discussed before watching to assist students to a better appreciation of the issues in the film.

Firstly, do students know where Arnhem Land is? Using an atlas or internet search, students can locate the area of Australia that is Arnhem Land. Further detail could include identifying the areas of Blue Mud Bay, Caledon Bay, Groote Eylandt and Woodah Island.

To place the events of the film into a historical context, students could make a timeline of significant moments in the recent history of Aboriginal Australia. The film broaches issues such as:

- the history of frontier conflict and massacres
- the legal status of Aboriginal people
- the role of missionary groups and government policy on the lives of Aboriginal people
- the political and legal acceptance of land rights and customary Aboriginal law
- reconciliation

Timelines might include significant moments in the development of each of the above issues. Suggestions include:

- Documented instances of frontier violence such as those at Pinjarra, WA (1834), Myall Creek, NSW (1838) and Coniston, NT (1928). What were the reasons behind these violent encounters?
- The policy of 'assimilation' and the 'stolen generations'. Why did many people believe this was good policy?
- Landmark protests such as the 1963 bark petitions and the 1966 Wave Hill strike. What was at stake here? What were the outcomes?
- Major political and legal outcomes such as the referendum for the attainment of citizenship and voting rights for Aboriginal people in 1967, the 1971 Gove Land Rights case and the Mabo and Wik High Court decisions of the 1990s.

Film title: Dhakiyarr vs the King

The title of the film provides a hint at the central conflict in the film: a collision of two laws and cultures. The film documents one instance of this collision and asks viewers to consider it from an Aboriginal perspective. In what ways might an Aboriginal perspective of first contact differ from a settler or police perspective?

The film details aspects of customary Aboriginal law. What awareness do students have of Aboriginal law? How do you think it might differ in emphasis from the Westminster system of laws?

Note: Source documents such as those held at the National Archives of Australia may refer to Dhakiyarr by alternate spellings, which include 'Tuckiar' and 'Takiar'.

Terra nullius

The Mabo decision in the High Court of Australia in 1992 acknowledged in law that Aboriginal people had a system of land ownership that pre-dated European occupation of Australia. How did the law understand the relationship between Aboriginal people and the land prior to this decision?

Who decides that one 'law' is extinguished and another takes its place? How did this happen in Australia in 1770 and in 1992?

Australia in the 1930s

The historical events in *Dhakiyarr vs the King* take place in the early 1930s. What was Australia like in the 1930s? How were Aboriginal people treated? Students could consider the predominant view of this time—summed up in Daisy Bates' book *The Passing of the Aborigines* (1938)—that the best that could be done for 'these primitive, lawless creatures' was to ease 'their inevitable passing'. There were some challenges to this dominant view, however. Professor F. Wood Jones argued in an address in Melbourne to mark the approaching 150th anniversary of white settlement in 1938 that the view of Aboriginal people as 'a dying and degenerate race' was 'the humbug with which the white man has always gilded his extermination of native races'. How might a belief that Aboriginal people were 'a dying race' influence the thinking of the time?

It was also a common view that Aboriginal people were 'savages'; historian Ted Egan suggests that many people in Darwin in the 1930s did not even consider Aboriginal people to be human beings. How might this view influence the treatment of Aboriginal people?

Arnhem Land

Section Four of this study guide contains information relevant to the following questions and may be used as a quick reference.

What makes Arnhem Land different from elsewhere in Australia? Students could do some research into the history of Arnhem Land.

Traders from Macassar in Sulawesi, Indonesia, sailed with the monsoon winds along the Arnhem Land coast annually from the early 1700s. How might the experience of dealing with 'foreign' cultures prior to any European contact have influenced the Aboriginal people of northern Australia?

How might the failure of pastoral or mining operations in Arnhem Land in the period leading up to the 1930s have made the experience of Aboriginal people of this region different from those in other parts of Australia?

Why did the National Missionary Council of Australia urge the Commonwealth government to establish the whole of Arnhem Land as a 'sanctuary for aborigines' [sic], and why was this recommendation accepted?

How did the discovery of bauxite in the 1960s influence government policy in the region?

Yolngu culture and law

The Aboriginal people appearing in this film are from an area of northeast Arnhem Land. They speak a language called Yolngu Matha (literally meaning the tongue of Yolngu) and they refer to themselves as Yolngu people.

The art curator Djon Mundine has said that sometimes 'it must seem that Aboriginal people are the most persistent proselytisers in the world'. His point is that after more than 200 years of trying to explain their culture to 'the deaf ears of white Australian government and society' they haven't given up.

For Dhukal Wirrpanda, one of the key figures in *Dhakiyarr vs the King*, this film was a very conscious effort to educate people about his culture. 'I want everyone to know about my father Dhakiyarr,' he said, 'and I want them to know about the culture and law and land that he came from. It is real.'

Students could do some research into Aboriginal spiritual traditions and the importance of kinship systems. A brief summary of Yolngu beliefs follows.

The Yolngu world

The Yolngu world is difficult to explain in a few short paragraphs, but a brief overview might assist students in interpreting the film. It is a complex network of interconnected relationships between people, plants, animals, rocks, sea and everything else in the landscape. Yolngu people believe that the world they know was made during the *Wangarr* (time before the first morning) sacred time of creation and the history of this creation is contained in their songs, dances and paintings. The Ancestral Beings, such as the *Djambarrpuynu* shark mentioned in the film, shaped and named the landscape as they journeyed across it. These Beings, Yolngu believe, are direct relations of Yolngu today.

The activities of painting, singing and dancing tell the stories of these Creator Beings and invoke the law that was given to Yolngu during this sacred creation time. What Western cultures might see as activities of 'the arts' to the Yolngu are also important legal-religious statements concerning the law and land that were brought into existence during this creation time. A song, for example, detailing the path of the ancestral shark re-affirms the creation law that is symbolised by the shark and declares the relationship between the Ancestor Being and the person singing the song.

Not every Yolngu person may sing every song or paint every design, however. Only those with a particular relationship to the land described within the story may do so. This is an essential part of Yolngu law. It is like trespassing on someone's country (or stealing) to sing or paint a story/design that you have no right to. Rules are also very strict about travelling across country owned by someone else. Yolngu describe their country as being like a house—you must first 'knock on the door' and ask permission to enter. This belief is also evident in Yolngu language—the word for 'your house' and 'your land' is the same—*wanga*.

Yolngu people believe that certain sites in their country are sacred places relating to various Creation Beings. These areas cannot be entered without an appropriate invitation or qualification.



2. Yolngu Matha Vocabulary List

In the Yolngu Matha language, words have many meanings—a literal meaning as well as deep religious, legal and metaphorical meanings.

Bathi: A bag, or dilly bag. The wearing of a ceremonial dilly bag denotes a particular status of the individual and may represent the deep ceremonial and legal knowledge of the wearer. In Yolngu law it functions in a similar way to the wigs and gowns worn by judges in Westminster legal systems.

Dharrangki: A type of bull-rush that grows on riverbanks. It also represents the law of the ancestors and creator beings and the striving of people to keep true to this law.

Dhudi Djapu: A clan name. It is the name of Dhakiyarr, Wuyal, Mulkun and Dhukal Wirrpanda's clan. It means 'bottom Djapu' and is distinguished from the 'top Djapu' clan whose main clan lands lie to the north.

Djambarrpuyngu: The name of a Yolngu clan and area where the 'Dreamtime' journey of the ancestor spirit, the Djambarrpuyngu shark, began. The shark was speared during its journey and as it swam and thrashed along its path, it created and named clans, creatures, rivers and coastal areas.

Gamunungu: White clay used in ceremonial bark painting and body painting. The application of the white clay carries a certain responsibility toward the law of the creators. It also provides the wearer with strength and power to face circumstances such as war or ceremony.

Makarrata: A legal ceremony where the aggrieved party in a dispute can get 'payback' or 'revenge' justice. It often concludes with a ritual spearing in the thigh of the accused after the person has invoked their clan totem to give them strength to face the ordeal.

Ngapaki: A word currently used in Arnhem Land to describe white people. The more common word is 'balanda' which came into the Yolngu language from the word 'Hollander', which was used by Macassan people (from the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia) to describe the Dutch in Indonesia.

This word however cannot currently be used due to the death of a man whose name is pronounced similarly. At the end of the appropriate mourning period, the word 'balanda' may be used again.

Wanga: A word used by Yolngu to describe their land. The wanga of any particular clan was first bestowed on their ancestors during Creation Time. The term is also used today to describe one's house.

Wukidi: The Yolngu funeral ceremony where the bones and spirit of the deceased are returned to the earth that gave birth to them. Clan songs and dances relevant to the deceased are sung, and people from many related clans come to participate and demonstrate their relationship in song and dance.

Yolngu: A word used to describe a human being, a person. It is more specifically used today to describe a person from the area of northeast Arnhem Land where the Yolngu Matha language is spoken.

3. After Watching

List some of the feelings you experienced while watching *Dhakiyarr vs the King*. What evoked these feelings? Why?

Write a short description of your reactions to the film. Compare these with other class members.

List what you think are the key themes of this film.

Law

Briefly list what you think are the main purposes of laws in society. In the film, Dhukal says 'Dhakiyarr had his own law'. Do you think Dhukal is talking about law in the same way as you understand it by your list?

Discussion topics

The idea of Aboriginal law is rarely discussed today. After watching the film, what impressions do you have about Aboriginal law?

In the film *Wuyal* Wirrpanda says 'This was the first meeting of these two laws and they couldn't recognise each other.' What does *Wuyal* mean? What are the two laws to which he refers? Could they both claim to be 'the law of the land'? Why/why not?

If Europeans entering Yolngu country were ignorant of Yolngu law, were they still 'trespassing'? Are they guilty of breaking Yolngu law?

If Dhakiyarr was ignorant of 'white law', could he be guilty of breaking it?

When Constable McColl was speared by Dhakiyarr what was 'the law of the land'?

In the film *Dhukal* says: 'Dhakiyarr did the right thing by his own law, but not by the white-mans' law'. While this is true, Dhakiyarr should have known that his law was no longer valid. Discuss.

People in legal circles today often discuss the trial of Dhakiyarr. Why do you think it would be a talked-about case even today? Do you think it was a fair trial? Give reasons to support your answer.

What do you think Dhakiyarr expected when he went to face 'the white-mans' law'?

The Makarrata system of justice has been called 'barbaric' compared to the 'civilised' court system of justice Dhakiyarr experienced in 1934. Is this a reasonable analysis in your opinion?

Wuyal says that the High Court decision to free Dhakiyarr was the first time the High Court recognised that the law should be the same for black and white Australians. Discuss.

A range of Yolngu words are translated as 'law' in the film. These words could also be translated as 'lore', 'culture', 'foundation', 'obligation', 'society', 'religion', etc. What does this tell us about the position of law in Yolngu culture?

Symbolism, appropriation and justice

Symbolism is important in all cultures. Symbols represent concepts or qualities in a very concise and powerful way.

Discussion topics

Name some symbols that are important to our Australian identity. Discuss why they are important, who decides this and what culture or history is attached to these symbols.

What objects or materials depicted in the film have symbolic meanings in Yolngu culture? What might be their connection with them?

What is the Yolngu equivalent to judges' wigs and robes? Why do you think ceremonial costumes are important in the legal cultures of different societies?

What point was *Dhukal* trying to make when he indicated the kangaroo and emu on the coat of arms at Fannie Bay prison and said: 'We thought he [Dhakiyarr] was going to be tried by another law, but it was the law from here. It was law from Australia!'

Dhukal repeats a few times that Dhakiyarr was 'a person, not a nobody'. Why do you think he feels a need to make this point?



Politics and society in Australia during the 1930s

When Dhakiyarr was sentenced to death for murdering Constable McColl there was outrage across Australia. Church groups, trade unions, academics and citizens held meetings and called for justice for Dhakiyarr. Their lobbying was eventually successful and a High Court appeal was begun. What does this tell us about Australia in the 1930s? Does it surprise you that such a strong movement existed at that time?

Dhakiyarr disappeared after his release from jail. It is widely believed that the police killed him in revenge for the death of McColl. There was no inquiry or investigation into his disappearance and Dhakiyarr's family was never informed. Does it surprise you that this could happen? How does this reflect the social and political attitudes of the Northern Territory and Australia in the 1930s?

Yolngu culture and the importance of land

One of the reasons that *Dhukal*, *Wuyal* and *Mulkun Wirrpanda* are still upset about what happened to Dhakiyarr is because his body was never found and returned home. During the *Wukidi* ceremony, Yolngu people return the bones of a person 'to the land and sea country that gave birth to them'.

Discussion topics

Early in the film *Dhukal* says that bones contain 'power' and suggests that returning bones to the land brings power back to the land. List other examples from the film of how the lives of people and land are interconnected.

Near the beginning of the film *Wuyal* stresses how important it is that Yolngu culture is passed from generation to generation. In what ways are the stories and laws of Yolngu culture passed from generation to generation? Why might this be a difficult task in this day and age? List some of the potential challenges. Why do you think Yolngu leaders fear that their culture might not survive?

Dhukal tells us that in the past young people and women were not allowed to paint or see certain designs. Why might this taboo have changed?

Yolngu art has many levels of meaning, with some more obvious than others. When *Wuyal* was showing his burial pole, how did he allude to this depth of meaning?

As Yolngu art is heavily related to land, why might some paintings and songs contain information that is secret to outsiders?



Reconciliation and healing

Filmmaker Phillip Noyce recently remarked that symbolic acts of reconciliation with our past are important because they ‘give us all back our dignity’. In *Dhakiyarr vs the King* the need to reconcile with the past is integral to what Dhukul and Wuyal Wirrpanda hope to achieve by going to Darwin. The apologies granted, and the placing of the memorial poles in the Supreme Court, ultimately left Wuyal ‘satisfied’.

Discussion topics

Why do you think the Yolngu warriors felt a need to take their ‘strong laws’ face-to-face with the ‘strong laws’ of the judges in the Supreme Court?

What did Wuyal mean when he said he was ‘going to break the spear that flew between his family and the family of McColl 70 years ago’? What did this act symbolise?

Why did Wuyal thank the High Court?

Why did Wuyal feel a need to apologise to the family of Constable McColl?

Many people say that it is unnecessary to keep talking about the history of white and black frontier contact because it all happened so long ago. Discuss.

Yolngu painting, song and dance

Painting, song, and dance are all aspects of culture that are important in Yolngu ceremony. It is only in recent times that ‘art’ has become a commercial activity that exists outside of ceremonial life.

Discussion topics

Using examples from the film discuss how songs and dances such as the ‘shark’ song or ‘red parrot’ song relate to the subjects represented in them. How does this demonstrate the link between people and land?

How do the subject of songs performed at the funeral of Dhakiyarr’s grandson differ from songs performed during the Christian funeral service?

In Western art terms, how would you describe the painting style used on the burial poles?

Media studies

The film uses a diverse range of media. List them.

Why do you think the filmmakers used black-and-white film instead of colour for some scenes?

Who is the narrator of the film?

In what sense is the journey in the film a circular one?

What do you think the filmmakers were trying to say by using this technique?

Write a review of *Dhakiyarr vs the King* for a newspaper.

4. A Brief History of Arnhem Land 1700-2000

‘Macassan times’

Some historians argue that the people of coastal Arnhem Land reacted differently from other Indigenous peoples to the entry of Europeans because they had already been exposed to the influence of ‘foreign’ cultures since at least the beginning of the 1700s. Traders from the island of Sulawesi—and elsewhere in what is now described as East Indonesia—had annually visited the coast of northern Australia searching for trade goods. Yolngu had traded goods such as trepang (a marine animal also known as sea cucumber or sea slug), baler and turtle shell, pearl and pearl shell. The depth of the relationship is probably best gauged by the fact that the Yolngu language contains around 400 words as a result of this contact, including words from the Dutch, Portuguese and Indo-Malay group of languages. The trade ended in 1906 when the federal government refused to allow Macassan boats entry to Australian waters.

Yolngu today talk warmly of these ‘Macassan times’. The Macassans are remembered as fair traders who accepted Yolngu ownership of the land. They paid a ‘rental’ to use Yolngu land to smoke the trepang that would eventually be sold to merchants in China. This acceptance of Yolngu law and land contrasted with their later dealings with ‘balanda’ or white people.

‘Their record during many years has been an evil one.’ —Administrator of the Northern Territory, 1905

In Darwin in the early 1900s Yolngu had a reputation as ‘evil’, most likely from their resistance to two failed cattle stations that had been set up on Yolngu land in the 1880s and early 1900s. The era of these two stations, called Florida and Arafura, is remembered today as one with many massacres. Like similar stories across Australia, most of the massacre evidence is from Aboriginal oral sources, but the Protector of Aborigines for the Northern Territory, Dr Cecil L. Strangman, sailed to the area shortly after Arafura station was closed by its owners, The Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company, in 1908. He reported that Yolngu wouldn’t let him land his boat on the shore until they were convinced he had no firearms. Their ‘pitiful cry of “no more bang”,’ he wrote, ‘plainly told a tale of what back country folks call a previous “lesson”.’

Japanese presence in Arnhem Land

Following the two cattle stations, Japanese fishermen and pearl divers were the next major group of ‘outsiders’ to be active on the northeast Arnhem Land coast. Donald Thomson, an anthropologist working in the area in the 1930s, was very concerned about the large numbers of Japanese. He counted over 70 boats stationed together at one beach in the Crocodile Islands and wrote that ‘prostitution flourished and serious friction occurred between the people [Yolngu] and the

Japanese'. Disputes between Yolngu and Japanese over trade goods and women were common, and this time is not remembered very warmly.

This 'serious friction' between Japanese and Yolngu resulted in casualties on both sides. In the most famous instance, five Japanese fishermen were killed at Caledon Bay in 1932. The reason most often given by Yolngu today was that the Japanese had insulted the leader of the Djapu clan, a man named Wonggu, who then instructed his sons to kill them. Fred Gray, a fisherman, also working in the area, reported the killings to the authorities in Darwin who—pressured by the Japanese embassy to act—decided to send a police party to investigate.

The Arnhem Land police parties of 1932-33

The first police party sent by the government in 1932 to investigate the killing of Japanese fishermen reported that they had seen nobody. A second party was sent in 1933. This party, led by Constable Ted Morey, and including Constables Mahony, Hall and McColl and a crew of Aboriginal 'trackers', began their investigation at Woodah Island, 100 kilometres to the south of Caledon Bay. This was the clan estate of a completely separate group of people who had nothing to do with the killing of the Japanese fishermen the previous year. The police found a group of women but no men. According to both police reports and Yolngu stories, the women were chained up while the police waited for the men to return.

According to the Yolngu version of the story, as depicted in *Dhakiyarr vs the King*, this is what followed: Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda returned from a hunting trip to find his wife Djappari chained up to Constable McColl. This is a very serious breach of Yolngu law. To Dhakiyarr, the police had illegally trespassed on his land and were now intending to steal his wife. He watched from the bushes as Djappari tried to 'give him room' by moving as far as possible away from the policeman. Then Dhakiyarr threw his spear, killing the policeman and setting his wife free. This was his land and that was his law.

The consequences

The police party buried Constable McColl on Woodah Island and reported his death to the authorities in Darwin, which decided to send a heavily armed 'punitive' party of police to the area. The mood in Darwin was one of outrage that 'blacks' might kill a policeman, and in the words of a local pastoralist it was necessary that 'Aboriginals... must be advised of government power' and 'taught a lesson'. The Administrator of the Northern Territory, Lt-Colonel Robert Hunter Weddell, argued to the federal government that a 'strong demonstrative force [is] imperative', and admitted that 'casualties amongst these aboriginals [sic] [would be] inevitable'. The response across Australia was immediate, with trade union leaders, church groups, academics and citizens expressing their horror at the possibility. The Archbishop of Melbourne sent a telegram to the Prime Minister that sums up many of the responses to the proposed punitive party: 'With I hope the majority of Australians I would regard the punitive expedition with grave misgivings and the possible result with horror.'

The Peace Mission

Eventually the federal government under Prime Minister Lyons was forced to stop the punitive party and instead authorise a group of missionaries—which became known as the Peace Mission—to go to Arnhem Land and find out the story of what really happened to McColl. The group of missionaries, with the assistance of Fred Gray who was working in the area and knew some of the Yolngu people well, managed to convince Dhakiyarr and the men who killed the Japanese at Caledon

Bay to go with them to Darwin and explain themselves to the courts. Immediately following their arrival in Darwin however, the police chained the Yolngu and sent them to prison. Fred Gray recalled, 'It was at this moment that I really regretted bringing any of them in to Darwin'.

Supreme Court, Darwin, 1934

The Yolngu were tried in the Northern Territory Supreme Court in 1934. Those who killed the Japanese were given 20-year jail sentences and Dhakiyarr was sentenced to death by hanging for the murder of Constable McColl. The Yolngu were not given adequate translators and when Dr Cook, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, voiced his concern at the impact of long jail terms on 'tribal' Aboriginal people, the judge replied that 'possibly the best and kindest thing to do to them is to hang them'.

The trial of Dhakiyarr, and his sentence, was later appealed to the High Court of Australia where it was decided that the 'trial of the prisoner seriously miscarried'. In a landmark decision the High Court quashed the sentence and ordered Dhakiyarr to be released. On 9 November 1934 the Minister for the Interior ordered the Administrator to ensure Dhakiyarr's protection and safe return home. He was released and never seen again.

There was no inquiry into Dhakiyarr's disappearance and his family was never given an account of what happened to him.

A brief history since 1934

Following the 'success' of the 'peace mission' of 1933, and in order to ensure that further killings such as those of the Japanese and Constable McColl were unlikely to happen again, the government agreed to the establishment in 1935 of a Methodist mission in Yirrkala, some 200 kilometres north of Woodah Island. The mission, offering both food and security, became a major settlement for the many surrounding clans.

In the 1960s bauxite was discovered on the Gove Peninsula near the mission and a major lease was granted to develop the ore deposit. The Yolngu protested this development and the case finally made it to the Northern Territory Supreme Court in 1971. It was the first land rights case in Australia and the Yolngu lost. The judge found that while they undoubtedly had a sense of 'obligation' to land, this could not be recognised under Australian law as 'ownership'. This finding both devastated and innervated the Yolngu people. Mr Djerrkura, former ATSIC Chairman, described a time when 'many old people literally died as a result of that decision'. The case however also stimulated the beginning of what became known as the 'outstation movement' where clan leaders returned their people to the ancestral lands they had vacated since the beginning of the mission days. These leaders were simultaneously claiming their land in case new mining interests tried to 'steal' it, escaping the impact of alcohol introduced by the mine that was devastating families and revitalising Yolngu culture and law.

The homelands of Yilpara and Dhuruputjpi—featured in *Dhakiyarr vs the King*—are testimony to the forethinking of these leaders. These outstations were established in the 1970s and 1980s as 'dry' or alcohol-free areas and, as places where a more traditional lifestyle is possible, are important centres of Yolngu learning. The establishment of these communities has not solved all of the problems facing the Yolngu of northeast Arnhem Land however, and many of the problems facing remote Aboriginal communities elsewhere in Australia are prevalent here also. This is partly what Dhukul means when he says at the end of the film: 'Dhakiyarr fought for this law, and we are fighting too.' It is an ongoing battle to keep the culture strong.

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Dhakiyarr vs the King

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