

D'harawal

DREAMING STORIES

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Doo'ragai Diday Boo'kerrikin

The Sisters Boo'kerrikin



Foreword

Throughout the past two hundred years, society has come to regard the Koori Dreaming stories as something akin to the fairy stories they were told as children.

However, for thousands upon thousands of years, the stories in this book were used as a teaching tool to impart to the youngest members of the clans the laws which governed the cultural behaviour of clan members. The successive attempts to destroy the Koori culture and assimilate The People into the Euro-centric population were unsuccessful, and the Dreaming Stories were able to continue in their disguise as charming legends where animals became the heroes and the heroines.

Historians and anthropologists have studied the Koori culture since they first arrived on this continent, and have come to the conclusion that the D'harawal culture is dead. Of, course, this has been done without reference to the descendants of that culture, and without even asking the proper questions. The D'harawal culture is not dead, it is a strong, living, vital culture of the Sydney and South Coast regions that just had to go underground for a while to be able to survive. Now that the right questions have been asked, we have the key to unlock a vast wealth of knowledge of this part of the country in which we live.

It is difficult to explain to a society based on commerce fuelled by the profit motive, that D'harawal culture is not based on the ownership of tangible things like land and dwellings and possessions, but it does have a very strong sense of ownership of information. That information, particularly in story form, was not traded, but could be given, and given freely, but its ownership was respected, those stories were not told or passed on by those to whom they had been given, but the knowledge in them was used by the receiver whilst ever they walked in the Land of the D'harawals, This Land.

It is hoped that our present society is now mature enough to be able to accept the Koori Dreaming stories as they were, as they are, and as they were always destined to be; tools to teach the Children of The People about living with Earth, the Mother, in peace and harmony.



Each story contains several layers of knowledge, the first of which are the secrets. Which can only be passed on or discussed with persons of the same level of knowledge or higher than the story teller. These secrets are never told within a legend, but are remembered separately from the legend itself. These are very important components of any legend, and it is the knowledge of the secrets which determines the level of the person's worthiness to ownership of that story.

The next layer of knowledge within the stories was the law, or laws, to be obeyed. The laws of the stories were told and often repeated after the telling of each story, after which the laws were discussed and their application in life demonstrated in a variety of ways.

The third layer of knowledge contained in each story was the lessons which could be learned from the story and the lessons were taught to all members of the group as well as visitors. These lessons introduced Peoples to the means to live in harmony with each other, and the land and its resources.

In this series of D'harawal Law Legends, there are many lessons to be learned. The D'harawals believed that children learned better and more quickly when they were encouraged to work through a problem, rather than be told the answer. By sharing the stories of our ancestors with you, it is hoped that not only will you recognise and learn the lessons and laws of the Peoples of This Land, but you will also come to understand and respect the culture of The People and our feelings and relationship with the land.

The stories do not in themselves act as an instruction manual - rather they point the way and encourage The People to think, to learn and to live. It is hoped that by sharing our stories, you too may be able to think, to learn and to live in This Land.

With understanding and respect for each other we can learn to more easily share This Land and live together in peace and harmony.

Frances Bodkin

THE SISTERS BOO'KERRIKIN

Doo'ragai Diday Boo'kerrikin



A long, long time ago there lived three sisters who looked so much alike that only their own mother could tell them apart. For that reason, the three women were all called Boo'kerrikin, and were referred to by friends and clan members as the Sisters Boo'kerrikin.

Now, the sisters Boo'kerrikin were very kind, and gathered food and brought water for children, and for the old and sick. For the children they would make a special sweet treat for them to eat whilst they were travelling, and they would provide special food to the old and sick which would make them feel better.

They were very beautiful, these three sisters, with their green eyes and golden hair, and soft, dark skin, and were much sought after by young men from all over This Land.

Suitor, after suitor would bring gifts to one or the other of the sisters, but would return to his clan, disappointed and confused. Their fame spread, and soon strangers came from far and wide, but, regardless of how attractive the men were, the three sisters turned them all down.

You see, the sisters Boo'kerrikin had made a pact with each other, they would each only marry the man who could tell the difference between her and the other two.

On several occasions a suitor would approach their mother in the hope that she would divulge the secret of telling the sisters apart. But the mother would just smile politely. "Only a mother can tell the difference." She would say.



One day, a tall handsome man named Bulung, arrived at the camp where the mother of the sisters Boo'kerrikin was busy tending to her daily tasks. Bulung approached the mother and laid before her many beautiful gifts. There were coolamons of many shapes and sizes and decorated with all the colours of the rainbow. There were smooth, hard gunni (digging sticks), and brightly coloured gulima (burls).

And to carry them in and to wear when she was cold or it rained, he gave her a cloak made of hundreds of the softest possum skins. The mother of the sisters Boo'kerrikin was sorely tempted to take the gifts, but she was very suspicious of the motives of this handsome man.



“And what do I have to give you to be able to accept these gifts with honour?” She asked.

Now, Bulung considered himself to be a very clever man. He wanted the fame of having solved the puzzle of the Three Sisters, and he also wanted the fame of having one of the sisters as his wife.

“I want nothing in return from you.” He replied, knowing that if she accepted his gifts, she was duty bound to offer him the hospitality of her camp for however long he wanted to stay.

The mother studied Bulung long and hard. Then, she reached forward and drew the cloak about her shoulders. It had been a long time since she had a man at her camp fire to perform the chores that only a man can do.

Bulung knew that now he would have a chance to study the sisters and learn how to tell them apart. He sat down by the fire, smiling. He would be famous throughout the land.

When the sisters returned to the camp and saw the beautiful cloak their mother was wearing, they cried out with delight, expressing the wish that one day, they too would each have a cloak like that.

That night, whilst Bulung slept, the mother told her three daughters of her suspicion as to Bulung's motives. But the sisters were quite happy, because, whilst Bulung was staying in their camp, they would not be bothered by other would-be suitors.

Bulung stayed with the Sisters Boo'kerrikin for many, many years, all the time he hunted for them, and for the people they helped.

He made them beautiful cloaks of feathers and of fur, and he carried their implements for them when they moved camp. And all the while he watched the sisters closely, trying to discover their secret.

With Bulung helping them, the kindly sisters were able to look after more and more orphaned or lost children, and many, many more sick and old people.

Many years passed, and still Bulung worked hard, helping the sisters. He mourned with them when their mother died, he shared their joy when the children they invited into their camp grew to adulthood, then selected a bride or a husband, and left their camp to make their own lives. But he never discovered the secret of how to tell the sisters apart.



When the three sisters died of old age, their kindness was recognised by the Spirit Woman who turned them into three trees. Trees, with flowers as golden as their hair, and leaves as green as their eyes.

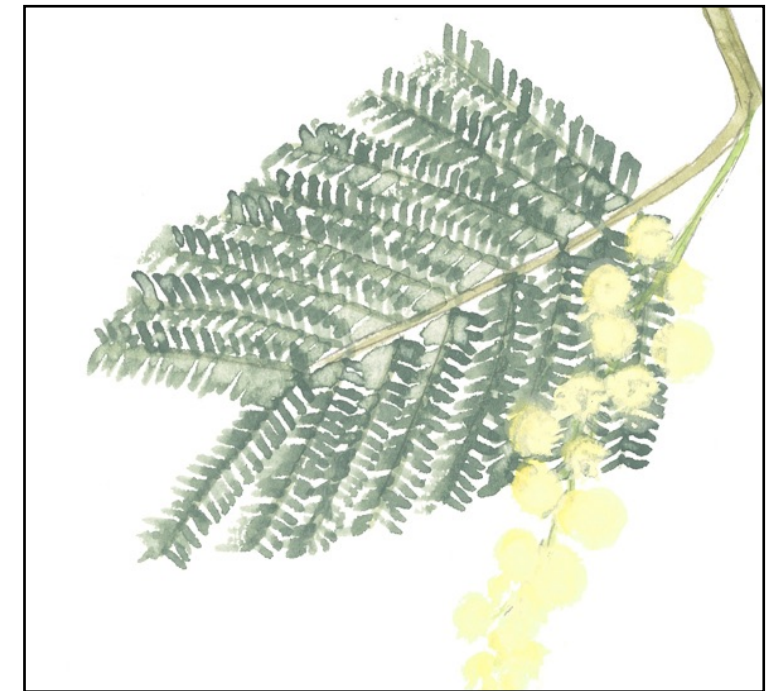
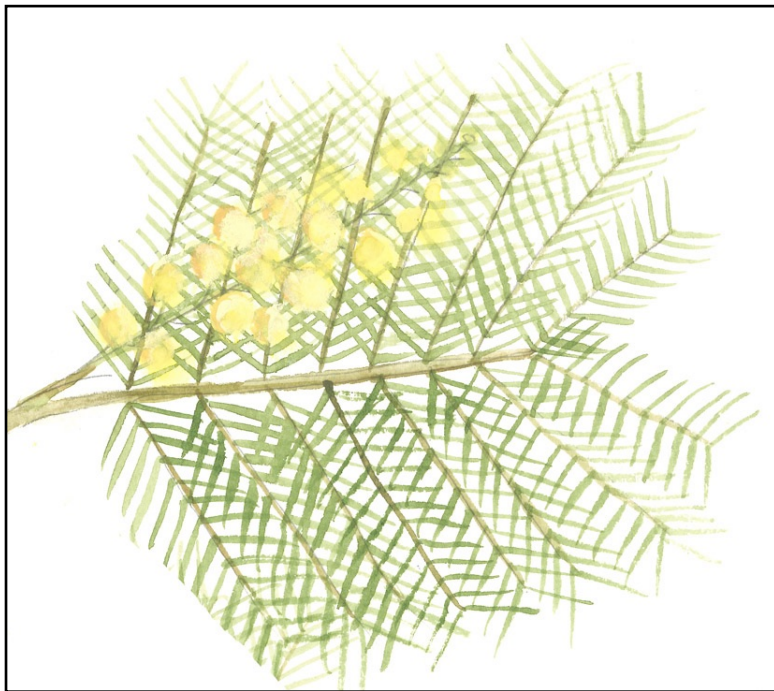
And poor Bulung died of loneliness in the shade of the three trees. He never learned the secret of how to tell them apart.

You see, although the sisters all had green eyes, but each had a different green in their eyes.

Now, you will find the Boo'kerrikin growing right throughout D'harawal lands, providing food for the old and sick, and sweet treats for the children.

Even now, it is difficult to tell the Sisters Boo'kerrikin apart. Except that their leaves are each a different coloured green.

Poor Bulung never, ever learned the lesson that no matter how clever you may think you are, there will always be people who can outwit you when they work together.



Acacia parvipinnula

Common Names: Silver Stemmed Wattle

Distribution: Blue Mountains

Niche: On clay or lateritic soils over shale or basalt.

Description

An evergreen tree which grows to a height of 10m.

Stem: Slender, erect and branching, with silvery or bluish grey bark. Leaves; Dark green, bipinnate, to 6cm long, with 8-12 pairs of pinnae, and 20-40 pairs of pinnules, linear to oblong, to 0.5cm long.

Flowers: pale yellow balls, occurring in dense clusters, and appearing spring and autumn. Fragrant.

Fruit: bluish brown or black, straight pods, to 11cm long, and 0.9cm wide, containing glossy, black seeds.

Uses

The wood was used for the making of weapons, ornaments and implements.

The old gum was mixed with warm water and smoothed over weapons and implements to improve their water resistance.

Associations with other plants: Eucalypt Woodland, *Eucalyptus crebra*, *Eucalyptus punctata*, *Eucalyptus molluccana*

WARNING: Inhalation of vapour from burning leaves may cause breathing difficulties.

Acacia decurrens

Common Names: Black Wattle; Green Wattle, Queen Wattle, Early Black Wattle, Sydney Green Wattle;

Distribution: Sydney, Western Sydney, Blue Mountains

Niche: Absent from Hawkesbury Sandstone area. Mainly on well-drained clay soils derived from Wianamatta Shales

Description: An evergreen tree which grows to a height of 15m.

Stem: Solitary, erect, sturdy, with widely spreading branches, young branches winged and smooth grey or green young bark, black and crumbly when old.

Phyllodes: Dark green, with paler undersurface, bipinnate, with 5- 12 pairs pinnae to 7cm long, and 15-40 pairs pinnules, to 1.5cm long.

Flowers: Bright yellow to deep golden yellow balls, occurring in axillary or terminal clusters of 6-15 balls, and appearing late winter to early spring. Fragrant.

Fruit: reddish brown, flat, straight pods, to 10cm long and 0.8cm wide, containing black, glossy, oval seeds to 0.45cm long and 0.2cm wide.

Uses:

Food source - On trees younger than seven years, the bark was used as a fish poison.

Medicinal - The hardened gum was ground to a powder, mixed with warm water

and white ash, then used as a substitute for white ochre for decorating rock shelters. The hardened gum was ground to a powder, mixed with warm water and the ash of fresh water mussel shells, then used as a waterproof sealant for canoes and containers. The gum, mixed with warm water was smoothed over boomerangs, spears, woomeras and coolamons to enhance their water resistance.

Beverage - The ash was mixed with water and applied to the body for decoration in the absence of ochre.

The ash was mixed with acacia gum and used as paint for rock art, in the absence of ochre.

Associations with other organisms: Immature seed eaten by White Cockatoo – *Cacatu galerita* And Galah – *Eolophus roseicapilla*

Grubs under bark eaten by Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoo – *Calyptorhynchus funereus*

Associations with other plants: Eucalypt Open Forest , *Eucalyptus punctata* *Eucalyptus crebra*

Comments: Killed by fire, but re-establishes from ant-stored seed

The Boo-kerrickin was used by the D’harawals as an indicator of when the bush needed to be burned. When it bore its heaviest load of seed, usually in its last years of viable life, this indicated that the bush should be burned before the pods opened.

WARNING: Inhalation of vapour from burning leaves may cause breathing difficulties.

Acacia parramattensis

Common Names: Sydney Green Wattle, Parramatta Green Wattle

Distribution: Coast and Ranges

Niche: Shallow, sandy or clay shale soils, or on alluvium on stream banks

Description

An evergreen tree which grows to a height of 15m

Stem: erect, slender, with spreading branches, and smooth, greyish green bark.

Phyllodes: Dark green, bipinnate, with 6-12 pairs of pinnae, and 20- 40 pairs of pinnules to 0.7cm long.

Flowers: Pale yellow balls, occurring in dense clusters and appearing summer. Fragrant.

Fruit: dark brown to black pods, to 11cm long, and 0.7cm wide, containing glossy, black seeds.

Uses

Food source.

Medicinal: The gum was mixed with warm water and mussel shell ash to make a waterproof sealant for containers and canoes.

This plant has mythological value.

Associations with other organisms: Seed eaten by Bronzewing Pigeon

Associations with other plants: Eucalypt Woodland, Forest

Eucalyptus tereticornis, *Angophora floribunda*, *Syncarpia glomulifera*, *Eucalyptus saligna*

Eucalyptus dalrympleana, *Acacia floribunda*, *Acacia binervia*, *Acacia decurrens*

Comments

Resprouts after low intensity fire, but killed by high intensity fires, and re-establishes from soil stored seed.

WARNING Inhalation of vapour from burning leaves may cause breathing difficulties.