

D'harawal

DREAMING STORIES

Frances Bodkin

Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews

Illustrated by Lorraine Robertson

Mull'goh

The Black Swan



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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

Mull'goh

The Black Swan

A very long time ago, when the Mull'goh clan lived in the lands to the north and to the west of the Yandel'ora, it was very, very cold, and snowed almost every day. Now, the Mull'goh clan were well known for their long, slender necks, which to them was a sign of great beauty, and they wore many decorations so that other clans could admire their graceful necks.

But there came a time when there were many children born to the Mull'gohs who had white skin. At first the Mull'goh hid those children from the sight of other clans, but, after a while there were too many to hide.

One day, when people of the Bubuk clan came to visit, they saw the white skinned children, and remarked that they resembled the people of the Goolay'yari clan.

Now, a long time before, the Pelican ancestor committed a terrible crime which resulted in the people of the Pelican being banished from walking upon This Land, and the Mull'goh did not like having their children compared to the Pelican ancestor.

When the Bubuk People returned to their own lands, the Mull'goh met and discussed this shame that had been brought upon them by the white skinned children.

For days they argued, until finally, the men of the Mull'goh clan said that they would take matters into their own hands, and began to hunt down the white skinned children and kill them. The mothers and grandmothers of the white skinned children ran to warn them that they must flee, telling them about the decision of the men. The white skinned children fled, but the angry men followed them, hunting them down, one by one.

But from afar, the kindly Wugan clan watched as the Mull'goh men hunted the fleeing children across the swamps, then, as the children collapsed from exhaustion, the members of the Wugan (Raven) clan swooped down and covered the childrens' white skin with their black feathered cloaks.

The children, wearing the black cloaks that had been given them by the People of the Raven, could not be distinguished from other Kooris as they made their way to the north and to the west. And the men of the Mull'goh clan returned to their lands sure that the accursed white skinned children had died in the swamps.

As time went by, the black feathered cloaks of the children who had fled across the mountains to the west had sealed themselves to the skins of the children, and they became the Wawaran clan, the People of the Crow. The children who fled to the north found themselves caught up on plants with great spines on them, which tore the black cloaks and allowed the whiteness of their skin to show through.

Those children eventually became the Diri'wun, the People of the Magpie clan.

The Spirit Woman, hearing the cries of the women of the Mull'goh clan, saw what had happened, and took the lands of the Mull'goh away from them, giving them, instead to the people of the Raven clan who had been so kind to the children. She told the Mull'goh, that because they had driven their children into the swamps to die, they would forever, only be able to make camp on the water, never on the land.

She gave them white fingers so that they would always remember what they had done, and then cursed them, so that their children would always be born white.

That is why the only way you can tell the difference between the Raven and the Crow, is that when the wind ruffles the feathers of the Crow, you can see the white skin beneath the black feathers.

And why the Mull'goh's wingtips are white and they
always have white babies.

Information about the Black Swan:

Cygnus atratus

The Black Swan is the only entirely black-coloured swan in the world.

Identification: In adult Black Swans the body is mostly black, with the exception of the broad white wing tips which are visible in flight. The bill is a deep orange-red, paler at the tip, with a distinct narrow white band towards the end. Younger birds are much greyer in colour, and have black wing tips. Adult females are smaller than the males.

Size range: 120 cm to 142 cm

Distribution: Black Swans are found throughout Australia with the exception of Cape York Peninsula, and are more common in the south. The Black Swan has been introduced into several countries, including New Zealand, where it is now common, and is a vagrant to New Guinea.

Habitat: Black Swans prefer larger salt, brackish or fresh waterways and permanent wetlands, requiring 40 m or more of clear water to take off. Outside the breeding season, Black Swans travel quite large distances. Birds fly at night and rest during the day with other swans.

Behaviour and adaptations Seasonality FeedingAndDiet

Feeding and Diet: The Black Swan is a vegetarian. Food consists of algae and weeds, which the bird obtains by plunging its long neck into water up to 1 m deep. Occasionally birds will graze on land, but they are clumsy walkers.

Life Cycle: Black Swans form isolated pairs or small colonies in shallow wetlands. They pair for life, with both adults raising one brood per season. Eggs are laid in an untidy nest made of reeds and grasses. The nest is placed either on a small island or floated in deeper water. The chicks (cygnets) are covered in grey down and are able to swim and feed themselves as soon as they hatch.

Breeding season: February to May in the north; June to September in the south.

Clutch size: Up to 10

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/black-swan#sthash.sFZXpk3m.dpuf>