

D'harawal

DREAMING STORIES

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The Story of Menan and Kogi



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 Story of Menan and Kogi

Once, long ago, the River now known as the Nepean flowed into the River that was the guardian of the Boora Birra., and now known as the Parramatta River. In those days, the Great Eel Spirit, Parradowee regularly travelled from his home in the deep hole in the River, to a place in the Yandel'ora. just near where the Forbidden Lands began.

This was the place where the Parradowee's children were born, and lived until they were old enough to travel down the river to the sea.

Now, also in the place, there lived a clan of the D'harawal, led by a wise leader called Menan.

Menan had lived a very long time, and had seen winters of great cold and summers of great heat. He had known times when there was no winter at all, and times when there was no summer. He remembered these times, and spoke of them often, warning The People that if such times were once, then they will once again be.

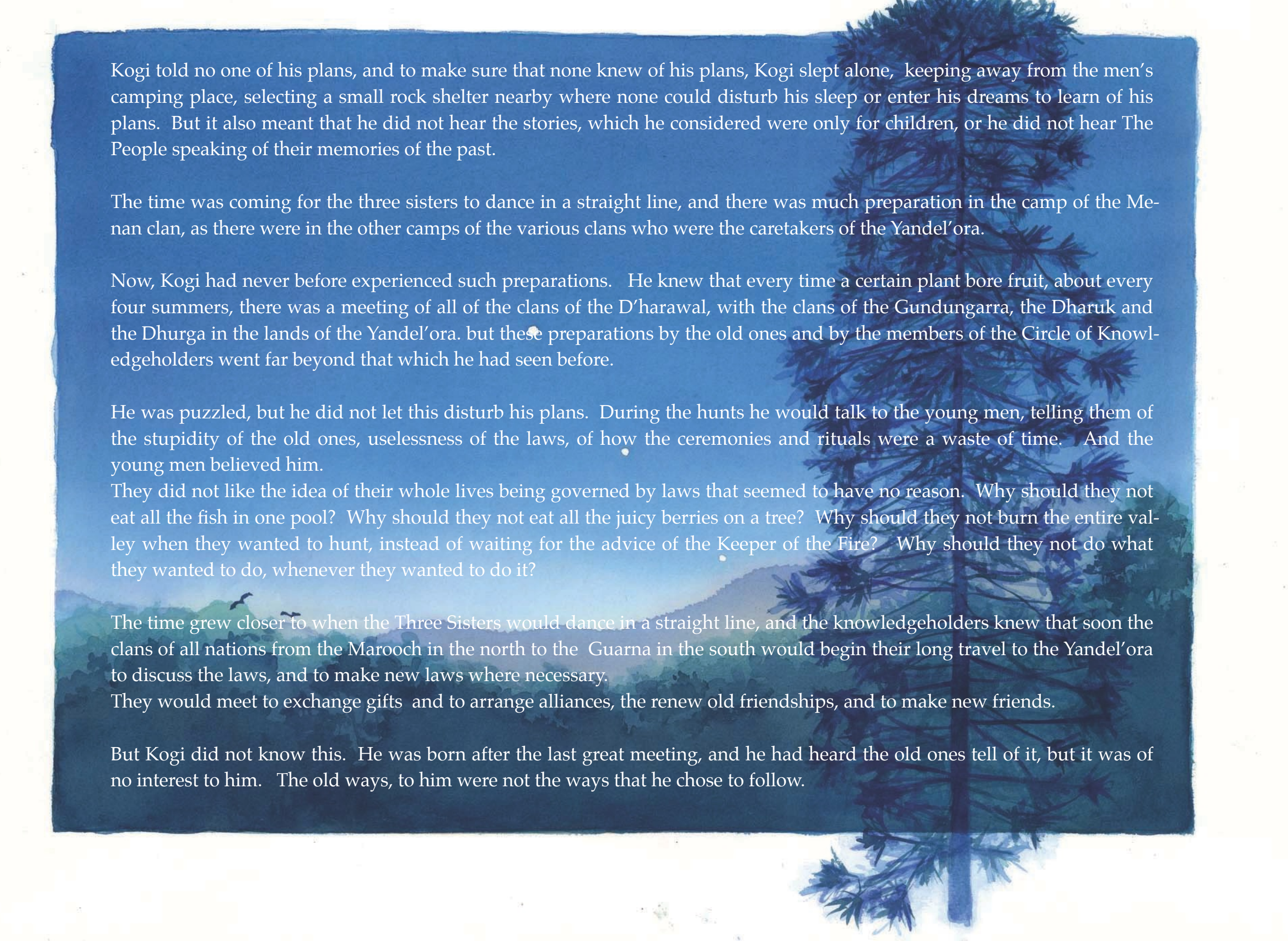
But the times of which we speak were good, and although The People did not laugh at Menan, they certainly smiled when he was not looking in their direction. Now, Menan knew this, but he knew that the words he spoke were true, and he needed to warn his children and make sure that they did what had to be done, and did not forget the proper ceremonies and rituals.

The fact that The People laughed at him did not deter him.

But also in the clan was a young warrior, the son of his brother's daughter, who had gone through initiation, but who discouraged other young men from going through the rituals and ceremonies necessary prior to initiation. This young warrior, who had been given the name of Kogi, was much admired by the younger members of the clan, and particularly by the boys, who followed him despite being told by their uncles that it was not the proper thing to do.

Many of the older ones warned Menan that they feared that the young warrior, Kogi, would challenge him for leadership in the not too distant future. But Menan was not worried, he knew that the Knowledgeholder's Circle would not allow Kogi to become leader of the clan. But what Menan and the other older ones did now know was that Kogi did not intend to become leader of the Menan Clan, he wanted to start a clan of his own, taking all the young ones with him, and leaving the old ones to die without the help of their children. Thus Kogi, thought, no one could take revenge on him, for he had not broken any laws or caused anyone to die.





Kogi told no one of his plans, and to make sure that none knew of his plans, Kogi slept alone, keeping away from the men's camping place, selecting a small rock shelter nearby where none could disturb his sleep or enter his dreams to learn of his plans. But it also meant that he did not hear the stories, which he considered were only for children, or he did not hear The People speaking of their memories of the past.

The time was coming for the three sisters to dance in a straight line, and there was much preparation in the camp of the Menan clan, as there were in the other camps of the various clans who were the caretakers of the Yandel'ora.

Now, Kogi had never before experienced such preparations. He knew that every time a certain plant bore fruit, about every four summers, there was a meeting of all of the clans of the D'harawal, with the clans of the Gundungarra, the Dharuk and the Dhurga in the lands of the Yandel'ora. but these preparations by the old ones and by the members of the Circle of Knowledgeholders went far beyond that which he had seen before.

He was puzzled, but he did not let this disturb his plans. During the hunts he would talk to the young men, telling them of the stupidity of the old ones, uselessness of the laws, of how the ceremonies and rituals were a waste of time. And the young men believed him.

They did not like the idea of their whole lives being governed by laws that seemed to have no reason. Why should they not eat all the fish in one pool? Why should they not eat all the juicy berries on a tree? Why should they not burn the entire valley when they wanted to hunt, instead of waiting for the advice of the Keeper of the Fire? Why should they not do what they wanted to do, whenever they wanted to do it?

The time grew closer to when the Three Sisters would dance in a straight line, and the knowledgeholders knew that soon the clans of all nations from the Marooch in the north to the Guarna in the south would begin their long travel to the Yandel'ora to discuss the laws, and to make new laws where necessary.

They would meet to exchange gifts and to arrange alliances, the renew old friendships, and to make new friends.

But Kogi did not know this. He was born after the last great meeting, and he had heard the old ones tell of it, but it was of no interest to him. The old ways, to him were not the ways that he chose to follow.

Menan and the old ones started to gather food, seeds and nuts that could be stored in coolamons, tubers and bulbs that could be stored in caves, and watching the old ones, and some of the young ones who still obeyed the laws, Kogi wondered if what was going to happen would interfere with his plans.

He approached Menan, smiling. “Grandfather, are you preparing for a long winter?”

Menan stood up, holding his aching back. “Not at all, young fellow.” Menan replied, returning the smile “But we are expecting visitors.”

Kogi went away and sat under a great tree to think. He did not like the fact that the clan were expecting other peoples to arrive, because it meant that he would have to postpone his plans to create a new clan. Or, he thought, begin immediately.

Kogi went around to each of the young ones, and told them that the time had come for them to leave the camps of Menan, and meet them at the top of the great hill before the sun set. He then picked up his spears and boomerang, and wandered away from the camp as if he were going to hunt.

After a short while, Menan and the other knowledgeholders noticed that some of the young ones were missing, and glanced knowingly at each other. Although Kogi had thought that he was acting in secret, some of the young ones had talked with their aunts and uncles about Kogi’s plans. Had Kogi decided to discuss his plan with them, they would have advised him against it, but would not have tried to stop him.



He was a man, and his decision was his decision. Those young ones who had chosen to discuss the plans with their aunts and uncles also were allowed to make their own decisions but after receiving advice, decided not to leave.

So Kogi found himself on top of the great hill with a band of ten young ones. He was angry that others had chosen to stay with their families. “They still want their mother’s milk.” He said churlishly, picking up his spears and leading his small band to a shelter on the side of the hill.

Two full moons had passed and Kogi was tired and angry.

The young ones were always hungry, and were clumsy in the hunting of the kangaroo, and even the wombat. They made too much noise, and were forever talking. They had eaten all the fruits on the trees around the shelter, and had dug up all the tasty tubers and bulbs, some were even talking of returning to the camp of Menan.

During this time Menan was preparing for the visit of the lawmakers, and checking the fish traps in the River, making sure that the fish and eels could not escape, and were content to live in the traps until required. On the Yandel’ora the other clans were gathering and storing food in preparation for the visitors.



However, during a meeting of the leaders of all the Lyrebird clans, one of the older members mentioned that the animals had been acting strangely, the birds had been quick to alarm, and the insects were swarming. The meeting discussed the meaning of these omens, they repeated the stories of such happenings before, and it was decided that all the clans should move to ground, away from the Mai’andowri and the Terri’tergro who drop their branches, away from the rock shelters and cliff faces, away from the banks of the River, and move to where the ground was flat and only grass and small shrubs grew.

Thus, the clans were camped on the grassy plains of the Yandel'ora when the Earth Mother shuddered.

The birds were the first to give warning. They flew high into the air, so many of them that they darkened the sky, then flew towards the east, where the sun rises. Their cries awakened The People who were ready when the Earth Mother shook. When the shuddering stopped, Menan counted his clan and was pleased that all were there except for those who had gone with Kogi. He then sent messengers to the other clans and was pleased when they returned with messages that all were safe.

But all were concerned about the group who had gone with Kogi. And parties of warriors were sent out to find him, but to no avail. All they found, instead, was a few spears and boomerangs scattered on the ground near where a cave had once been.

Kogi had not learned the stories, he had not learned one of the most important laws of all.

To see tomorrow, we must learn from yesterday.

That which has gone before will come again.

You see, Kogi should have learned that when the warning signs appear and the Earth shudders like a woman in childbirth, it is not wise to shelter in caves or near cliffs or rivers.

