

D'harawal

DREAMING STORIES

Frances Bodkin

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Illustrated by Lorraine Robertson

Miwa Gawaian and Waratah

How the white waratah became red



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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

Miwa Gawaian and Waratah

How the white waratah became red

Once, long ago, there lived a beautiful woman of the White Pigeon clan, who bore the name Wurrata. Since the time the Spirit Woman first drove her talking stick into the ground, and it turned into the white flower, only those women who bore the name Wurrata were given the duty of attending to the needs of the flower we now know as the White Waratah.

Because she was honoured by being given the name Wurrata, it was the duty of this beautiful woman to always attend the Miwa Gawaian, the gift of the Spirit Woman. Many of the young men of the D'harawal clans fell in love with this woman, but all respected her wish to remain beside the flower of Korrobori.

Except one.

A great and powerful warrior of the Hawk clan, Mananga, fell in love with Wurrata, and wanted her as his wife, regardless of her duties or her preferences. Mananga thought that if he married Wurrata, he would become the most powerful person in This Land.

He was a great warrior, the greatest warrior, in fact, but he wanted to be more. He was not satisfied.

He thought, that by marrying Wurrata, he would be favoured by the Spirit Woman above all others.

Firstly, he plied Wurrata continuously with gifts, travelling to the Great Caves to search out and bring back the beautiful crystals he thought would bind her to him.

But still, Wurrata remained with the Miwa Gawaian. Not only refusing Mananga, but also refusing his gifts.

Mananga pleaded with Wurrata, telling her that if she did refuse to be his wife he would die and his spirit haunt her forever. Wurrata laughed, saying that the Miwa Gawaian would protect her from his spirit, anyway, she was not, and never would be, afraid of him.

Mananga went away and sulked. He wanted Wurrata, not only because he loved her, but also because he knew that if he did not persuade her to marry him he would be the laughing stock of all the people. He would never be the most powerful man in This Land.

He travelled far and wide, looking for spells that he could use to bind Wurrata to him, but the magic of the Miwa Gawaian was too powerful.

Nothing he could do would make her forget her duties and responsibilities to the Flower of Korrobori.

Finally, he decided that, if she once again refused to come with him he would destroy the gift of Korrobori. He went to the creek at a place now called Appin, where he sharpened his axe on a special rock. Then, hiding the axe behind the feathers of his dancing belt, he went to the place of Miwa Gawaian, and stood before Wurrata.

“If you do not come with me willingly, I will destroy the Miwa Gawaian.” He shouted.

Wurrata got to her feet in alarm as Mananga took the axe from beneath his dancing belt and moved toward the Miwa Gawaian. As he swung the axe at the flower, Wurrata flung herself between Mananga and the Miwa Gawaian.

As Wurrata’s blood spurted over the white flower, Mananga cried out in grief and despair.

He had not only killed the woman he loved and wanted as his wife, but he had also destroyed his ambition to become the most powerful warrior in This Land.

The Miwa Gawaian, who also loved Wurrata, saw what had happened, and grieved for her.

So the People would always remember the terrible thing that had happened, the Miwa Gawaian turned Wurrata’s spirit into the honey bee, so that she would always be able to attend the Flower of the Spirit Woman in safety, and never again, would there be a need for a Wurrata to tend to the Miwa Gawaian.

Also, Korrobori, seeing through the spirit of the Miwa Gawaian the events that had happened, decreed all the children of the white flower would be born red, the colour of Wurrata’s blood.

That is why, today, whenever you see the Miwa Gawaian, you will also see the honey bee busily attending to it.

And to remember the bravery of the beautiful Wurrata, all the children of the Miwa Gawaian have red flowers.

But, there would always be a Miwa Gawaian to enable The People to seek counsel from the Spirit Woman.

Information about the Waratah:

Waratah

Telopea speciosissima (plant family: *Proteaceae*)

Floral Emblem of New South Wales

Telopea speciosissima, was proclaimed the official floral emblem of New South Wales on 24 October 1962. Robert Brown (1773-1858) named the genus *Telopea* in 1810 from specimens collected in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney. Sir James Smith (1759-1828), a noted botanist and founder of the Linnaean Society in England, wrote in 1793:

'The most magnificent plant which the prolific soil of New Holland affords is, by common consent, both of Europeans and Natives, the Waratah. It is moreover a favourite with the latter, upon account of a rich honeyed juice which they sip from its flowers'.

The generic name *Telopea* is derived from the Greek 'telopos', meaning 'seen from afar', and refers to the great distance from which the crimson flowers are discernible. The specific name *speciosissima* is the superlative of the Latin adjective 'speciosus', meaning 'beautiful' or 'handsome'. 'Waratah', the Aboriginal name for the species, was adopted by early settlers at Port Jackson.

Telopea is an eastern Australian genus of four species. Two are confined to New South Wales, one to Tasmania and one extends from eastern Victoria into New South Wales. *Telopea* belongs to the family, *Proteaceae*, which is predominantly Australian and southern African in distribution and includes genera such as *Grevillea*, *Banksia*, *Macadamia* and *Hakea*. *Protea cynaroides*, King Protea, is the official floral emblem of the Republic of South Africa.

The Waratah is a stout, erect shrub which may grow to 4 metres. The dark green leathery leaves, 13-25 cm in length, are arranged alternately and tend to be coarsely toothed. The flowers are grouped in rounded heads 7 to 10 cm in diameter surrounded by crimson bracts, about 5 to 7 cm long. It flowers from September to November and nectar-seeking birds act as pollinators. Large winged seeds are released when the brown leathery pods split along one side.

The species is fairly widespread on the central coast and adjoining mountains of New South Wales, occurring from the Gibraltar Range, north of Sydney, to Conjola in the south. It grows mainly in the shrub understorey in open forest developed on sandstone and adjoining volcanic formations, from sea level to above 1000 metres in the Blue Mountains. Soils within its range tend to be sandy and low in plant nutrients. Rainfall is moderately

high. Waratah plants resist destruction by bushfires, a natural element of their habitat, by regenerating from the rootstock. Flowering recommences two years after a moderate fire.

The Waratah is a spectacular garden subject in suitable soil and climate; it flowers prolifically and tends to be long-lived. Failures can usually be attributed to the effects of unsuitable soil conditions, aspect or climate. Seeds should be sown in a coarse sandy medium and soon after germination the seedlings should be transplanted into individual pots of similar soil. Fresh seeds germinate readily but the seedlings are prone to the fungal disease, 'damping off', which may be reduced by exposing the seedlings to full light, except for the shading necessary after transplanting. Propagation by cuttings is also possible. In the garden, plants should be grown in lightly shaded to sunny positions in deep, well drained soil. They need to be well watered until fully established but waterlogging must be avoided.

The Waratah responds well to pruning which encourages flowering the following year, and overcomes the natural tendency of the shrub to assume a straggly shape. Some pruning is achieved by cutting flowers for decoration. It is a spectacular cut flower and lasts well in water.

Flowers are usually crimson, but a rare creamy white form, *Telopea* 'Wirrimbirra White', has been cultivated successfully as a horticultural curiosity. Manipulated hybrids of *T. speciosissima* have been produced combining the grandeur of its flowers with the greater frost tolerance of other *Telopea* species. Hybrids between *T. speciosissima* and the Braidwood Waratah, *T. mongaensis*, have smaller flowers but are usually more floriferous with a compact shape and attractive foliage. One of these hybrids is the registered cultivar, *Telopea* 'Braidwood Brilliant', a spectacular garden plant developed at the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

The Waratah occurs naturally in at least ten national parks in the geological formation, known as the Sydney Basin. Brisbane Water, Dharug and Macquarie Pass National Parks are among the areas where this species is conserved. Waratahs are cultivated north of Sydney and in the Dandenong Ranges, Victoria. They are grown in Israel, New Zealand and Hawaii for the cut flower trade. It was introduced to England in 1789 but cannot survive English winters out of doors except in the south-west coastal regions, and it rarely flowers in glasshouses. It is also cultivated in California.

When the Australian flora began to influence artists and craftsmen of European origin, the Waratah was adopted as a motif. The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney has a significant collection of arts and crafts featuring designs based on the Waratah. The diversity of media used in the collection include suede, stained glass, bone china and earthenware, glassware, copper, bronze, and wood. In 1915, R. T. Baker, a passionate advocate of the waratah (and other local flora) as a motif in art, craft and industry, wrote:

- 'The entire plant (waratah) lends itself to such a boldness of artistic ideas in all branches of Applied Art that it has few compeers amongst the representatives of the whole floral world...'

A little later artists like Margaret Preston used the bold shape of the Waratah in her hand-coloured woodcut prints [illustration].

Many government authorities and community groups in New South Wales use the Waratah in their insignia, often adopting a stylised version of the flowerhead. It was depicted on the 3 shilling stamp [illustration], one of a set issued in 1959 illustrating Australian flora. Margaret Stones, an Australian botanical artist then attached to the staff of Kew Gardens, London, designed the stamp. The Waratah was used again on the 30 cent stamp [illustration] as part of a State floral emblem set issued on 10 July 1968.

<https://www.anbg.gov.au/emblems/nsw.emblem.html>

Check out this link for a performance of this story: <http://tonylewis.asia/waratah/dharawalDreaming.html>