

D'harawal

DREAMING STORIES

Frances Bodkin

Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews

Illustrated by Lorraine Robertson

Boola Diday Murrawung

The Emu Sisters



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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

Boola Diday Murrawung

The Emu Sisters

A very long time ago, there were two sisters of the Murrawung clan, whose names were Miya and Tiani, and they were known far and wide as the best dancers in the whole land.

The two sisters were very proud of their talents and although they taught many others to dance, they always retained certain secret steps to ensure that none would be better than they.

But, as usually happens to beautiful young women, two brave warriors fell in love with them. Bund'yall fell in love with Miya, and Tjandi fell in love with Tiani.

The sisters were flattered by the attentions of the two brothers, but refused to give up their dancing. In an effort to win the favours of Tiani and Miya, Bund'yall and Tjandi made beautiful cloaks of brightly coloured feathers and gave them to the two sisters.

However, instead of showing their gratitude to the two brothers, Tiani and Miya simply wrapped the cloaks about themselves and continued to dance.

The brothers were distraught, they loved the sisters so much, but the sisters scarcely noticed them. True, every day they wore the cloaks that the brothers had given them, but, instead of thanking them, or even giving them a special smile, the sisters just continued to dance.

Then one evening, as Miya and Tiani were dancing around the fire, they heard a strange sound, a booming sound that was keeping time with their steps.

Their audience began to chatter excitedly, and look around behind them, and the two sisters felt a pang of jealousy when they realised that they were no longer the centre of attention. They stopped dancing, and moved towards the source of the strange sound.

Their audience parted to allow the two girls to get through, and there they saw the brothers beating on a hollow log with two sticks.

The brothers smiled at each others when they saw the sisters. They were overjoyed, at last they had done something to make the sisters take notice of them.

“Dance!” Cried Tjandi. “Yes.” Cried Bund’yall. “Dance!. Let your feet hit the ground, when our sticks hit the log.”

The sisters did as they were told, and the wonderful sound of the sticks beating the hollow log made their dancing so much more exciting. Their audience cheered and sang as the sisters danced and the brothers beat the log.

Because they could not move the log, people had to come from all over the land to see and hear the dance.

And come they did. The fearsome Wiradjuri came from over the mountains, the strange Mulimuli, the warriors of the Gamilaroi, all came to watch and hear.

The two brothers married the two sisters. They had children and were very happy.

But then, a magic man came from the sea, and with him he brought two short sticks that he clapped together as he told the peoples great tales of other lands.

The two sisters listened with great interest to his stories, and as they became familiar with the tales, they began to dance the stories, using the clapping of the sticks to time their steps.

The brothers realised that they could lose their wives to this magician unless they did something very quickly. They started to beat the hollow log until the sound echoed through the hills, and could be heard way over the mountains. It touched the hearts of the sisters, and they forgot about the Magician.

The Magician looked up and smiled, his eyes glowing evilly. You see, he was not really a man, but an evil demon who had fallen in love with the two sisters. He whispered some words, and the log which the brothers was beating collapsed to dust. He then placed a curse on the two women, so that when he began to clap the two sticks together, they could do nothing but dance and follow him.

The brothers, realising that they were dealing with an evil spirit, knew that normal weapons would have no effect against him. They quickly grabbed some boomerangs, but instead of throwing them at the magician, they began to clap them together, to make music.

This time the sisters were drawn back to their husbands, dancing around the fire to where their husbands were standing with the singing boomerangs in their hands.

The magician rose up, and taking his true form, caused the fire to blaze fiercely. The flames caught the feathered cloaks, charring them and splitting them, causing the feathers to sear into the flesh of the two women.

The two sisters looked down at themselves, and the brown and black and ash coloured feathers covering their bodies, and tears rolled down their cheeks. Completely under the spell of the magician, they followed him, away into the night, away from their husbands and their children.

The brothers were distraught, they wanted to follow their wives, but knew that even if they did, they would not be able to lift the curse placed on them by the demon.

Instead they stayed and looked after the children, and hoped that one day the curse would be lifted or the demon would become tired of their wives and allow them to return.

That is why it is the male emu who raises the children, and why the feathers of the emu are split. And it is why, when they dance, the D'harawals use the clap sticks and the boomerangs to make music.

Information about the Emu:

Dromaius novaehollandiae

The name 'emu' is not an Aboriginal word. It may have been derived from an Arabic word for large bird and later adopted by early Portuguese explorers and applied to cassowaries in eastern Indonesia. The term was then transferred to the Emu by early European explorers to Australia.

Identification: The Emu is Australia's tallest native bird, reaching between 1.6 m and 1.9 m when standing erect. Adult Emus are covered with shaggy grey-brown feathers except for the neck and head, which are largely naked and bluish-black. The wings are greatly reduced, but the legs are long and powerful. Each foot has three forward-facing toes and no hind toe. Most people see Emus along roadsides, near fences or other barriers, giving the impression of close association. However, Emus are not really social, except for young birds, which stay with their father.

Size range: 160 cm to 200 cm

Distribution: The Emu is found only in Australia. It lives throughout most of the continent, ranging from coastal regions to high in the Snowy Mountains. Emus were once found in Tasmania, but were exterminated soon after Europeans arrived. Two dwarf species of emus that lived on Kangaroo Island and King Island also became extinct.

Distribution by collection data text and link Habitat

Habitat

The main habitats of the Emu are sclerophyll forest and savanna woodland. These birds are rarely found in rainforest or very arid areas.

Seasonality: Emus move within their range according to climatic conditions. If sufficient food and water are present, birds will reside in one area. Where these resources are more variable, Emus move as needed to find suitable conditions. They are known to move hundreds of kilometres, sometimes at rates of 15 km to 25 km per day.

Feeding and Diet: Emus eat fruits, seeds, growing shoots of plants, insects, other small animals, and animal droppings.

Communication: Booming, drumming and grunting. Booming is created in an inflatable neck sac, and can be heard up to 2 km away.

Mating and reproduction: Nesting takes place in winter. The male and female remain together for about five months, which includes courtship, nest building and egg-laying. The nest consists of a platform of grass on

the ground, about 10 cm thick and 1 m - 2 m in diameter. The large eggs (130 mm x 90 mm) are laid at intervals of two to four days. These are dark bluish-green when fresh, becoming lighter with exposure to the sun. The shells are thick, with paler green and white layers under the dark outer layer.

The female dominates the male during pair formation but once incubation begins, the male becomes aggressive to other Emus, including his mate. The female wanders away and leaves the male to perform all the incubation. Sometimes she will find another mate and breed again. The male incubates the eggs without drinking, feeding, defecating or leaving the nest. During this time, eggs often roll out of the nest and are pulled back in by the male.

Newly hatched chicks are cream-coloured with dark brown stripes. They leave the nest when they are able to feed themselves. Young birds stay close together and remain with the male for four months. They finally leave at about six months. During this period, the stripes fade and the downy plumage is replaced by dull brown feathers. Emus are nearly fully grown at one year, and may breed at 20 months.

Sometimes eggs that have not hatched remain in the nest after the male and young have left and become sun-bleached. Bleaching takes about three months.

Breeding season: April to June

Clutch size: 5 to 15

Incubation: 55 days

Time in nest: 7 days

The first specimen collected in 1788 by Europeans was from what is now an inner suburb of Sydney: Redfern. Today, Emus are absent from heavily populated regions, especially along the east coast. Despite this loss in some areas, Emu numbers may have increased since European settlement. The provision of water for domestic stock, together with the Emu's ability to reproduce rapidly, has favoured its survival.

Emu farming has been tried for several decades but recently interest has been growing in this industry. A pair of Emus may produce ten eggs a year under good captive conditions, which yield on average 5.5 chicks. At the end of 15 months, these would yield 4 square metres of leather, 150 kg of meat, 5.5 kg of feathers, and 2.7 litres of oil. Eggshells of infertile eggs have been used for carving.

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/emu#sthash.SL0XUOA3.dpuf>