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
A very long, long time ago, the Eel Dreaming Spirit, Parra’dowee, used to travel down the Great River of the Wirrim’birra to the Boora Birra for a meeting with his old friend, Boo’ambillyee, the Shark Dreaming Spirit. These old friends would often meet to discuss business, and the happenings of their Peoples. But this time, the perceptive Boo’ambillyee could see that Parra’dowee was much troubled and as she nudged a tasty morsel to her old friend she spoke.
“I sense that you are concerned, my friend.” She said. “Why do you not tell me, even if I cannot help you, the telling will make you feel better.”

The Parra’dowee nodded sadly. “I had not meant to weigh you down with my troubles, but I am deeply ashamed of something that I have done.”

Boo’ambillyee looked at her friend in great surprise. She could not imagine the Parra’dowee doing anything of which he could be ashamed, and she would have laughed out loud, if she had not seen the deep shame in the Eel Dreaming Spirit’s eyes. “How can I help?” She asked.

Parra’dowee took a deep breath, he had not meant to show his feelings so openly to his friend, but then he realised that the Shark Dreaming Spirit, as with all sharks, had a very sensitive nose, and could smell emotions as easily as one can smell food.

“Many years ago, a young man whose name was Kollgul came down from the mountains to the swamps of Mull’goh. He seemed a sensible young man, who was eager to learn, who was polite, and respectful. He did me many favours, and in return, I taught him many things, more than I should have, without bothering to test his worthiness to learn these things.”

Boo’ambillyee listened silently as Parra’dowee told of a false magician who came from afar and lured Kollgul away from his home in the mountain above the swamps of Mull’goh, who told him of untrue things, of how he could be a great warrior, feared by everyone by using the magic that this false magician would teach him.
Kollgul believed these untruths and told a few of his friends who came to listen to the false magician tell of how Koll’gul was really a great warrior, who could claim all the lands between the mountains and the sea. His friends were greatly impressed, and followed him as he made his way down the Great River.

They were overjoyed and danced and sang as Kollgul caused the old ones to flee in fear of his magical tricks taught to him by the false magician, and as he and his friends marched down the Great River they were joined by others who had been exiled by their own clans.

But the false magician, although he knew of some magic, did not know how to stop the spells once they had been made. Thus, the lands were left spellbound, and uninhabitable.

Parra’dowee told Boo’ambillyee of how Kollgul had learned of Tarral’bai, the Place of Secrets situated under the Parra’woori, and he wanted to possess the secrets, so that not only The People would fear him, but all creatures, even the Dreaming Spirits.

Boo’ambillyee smiled, and Parra’dowee felt a chill of fear at the sight of those sharp teeth. “Let him break my laws and I will eat him.” She said. “Slowly.”

Parra’dowee stared at his friend, then suddenly, he too smiled. “We must protect the Place of Secrets.” He said. “But perhaps we can also trap the false magician, and Koll’gul and his followers.”
Kollgul, the false magician, and his followers slowly made their way down the Great River, bringing fear to many of those who opposed him, and to those he could not bring fear he caused grave injury, or caused false accusations to be brought against them. The People of the Sweet Water cried out to Parra’dowee to help them, but Parra’dowee told them to be patient.

Soon Kollgul and his band moved down to the Banarong where they found the Carer of the Well of Secrets trying to hide the well from his eyes. When she tried to protect the well from him Koll’gul grew angry and struck her with his bundi, killing the frail old woman.

When he found only water in the well, he threw her body into the hole so that no other would ever be able to drink from the well. This action not only angered the Spirit of This Land, it also angered all other Spirits that something that was so sacred could be desecrated. Each of the Spirits hungered for revenge for this action, but Parra’dowee quieted them.

When there were times that the Spirits needed to take human form they drank from the waters of this well, gently they removed the old woman’s body and gave her the proper rituals, before becoming people and setting up camp right on the northern most part of the Parra’woori to wait for the arrival of Kollgul and his band.

It was not long before Kollgul saw their campfire and, accompanied by the false magician, entered the camp, fully armed. The Spirits feigned horror as the armed men demanded to know where the Place of Secrets was. They cried out loudly as if they were afraid, making so much noise that the false magician could not weave his spell. Losing his temper, Kollgul raised his spear to kill the nearest one.

At that moment Parra’dowee struck the Banarong with his tail and the earth shook violently. By the time the false magician, and Kollgul and his followers got to their feet the spirits had reverted to their natural form and disappeared. Kollgul then knew fear.
He knew then that he had broken many laws, and he knew that his punishment would be dire.

He turned to the false magician. “Help me, this is all your fault.” He said.

But the false magician was also afraid. He saw that the Parra’woori was now separated from the land, where they had walked was now deep, swiftly flowing water.

And swimming in those waters they could see the fins of many sharks. On a small beach near the campfire of the spirits, the Parra’dowee came ashore, and smiled up at Kollgul.

“You now have the Place of Secrets in your possession.” Said the Great Eel Dreaming Spirit. “Do with it what you will. If you can find it.” Then he disappeared.
Kollgul looked around him. The Parra’woori was now an island, an island on which there was not a tree large enough to build a canoe to enable them to cross the channel. An island where the only food was a few scrawny roots buried in the shallow soils. An island where oysters did not grow, where birds did not come to roost in the few trees, where only a few lizards lived.

An island guarded by the children of Boo’ambillyee.

Kollgul had got what he had hungered for, The Parra’woori and the Tarral’bai, the Place of Secrets, but it would do him no good. He and his followers were trapped there, left only with two choices, to starve to death on the island, or to take the chance and swim across the channel.
One of his followers, a woman, whose name none remember, jumped into the water, and swam across the channel. They watched her as she swam, followed by the fins of the sharks. Finally she made it on to a rock on the opposite shore. They could hear her laugh with joy as she stood on the rock and waved to them.

It was then that a huge shark, bigger than anything they had ever seen before, leapt out of the water, soaring over the rock, taking the woman in one single mouthful. Kollgul and his followers stared in disbelief as the only sign left of the woman was a few spots of her blood on the rock.

Boo’ambillyee, swam across the channel to where Kollgul and his followers were waiting. She smiled up at them from the water. “I am very patient.” She said.

“But I will dine on each of you.” Then she swam off, and disappeared beneath the waves.
“But I will dine on each of you.” Then she swam off, and disappeared beneath the waves.

Kollgul turned to the false magician and once again blamed him for all that had happened. Then he turned on his followers telling them that if they had truly believed in him, none of this would have happened.

For a long time they lived on the island, getting waker and weaker, fearing to go down to the small beach for fear of the sharks. They had seen Boo’ambillyee leap from the water to take the Forgotten One, they were not going to risk the same fate.

One by one they died, until only the false magician and Kollgul were left. Each lived on opposite ends of the island, each never speaking to the other, but each cursing the other every day. Then one day, Kollgul was standing on top of the cliff, watching the sharks swimming around below him when he saw something. He quickly laid down on the edge of the cliff and looked over.

“The sign!” He cried. “The sign! I have found the Place of Secrets!”

It was then that the great form of the Boo’ambillyee surged up out of the water. Kollgul could only stare at those terrible teeth before they closed around him and dragged him down into the depths of the sea.

Nearby the false magician heard the fearsome scream. He sat down upon a rock on the highest part of the island, and there he died. His body rotted way, until only a black mark was left on the rock, to remind The People of what happens to those who make false claims.
After a while, Parra’dowee and Boo’ambillyee met once again to discuss business. When they were about to part, Parra’dowee turned to Boo’ambillyee. “I think it is about time that we returned the Tarral’bai to The People.” He said. “But this time we will ensure that none can misuse it.”

Boo’ambillyee nodded her agreement. Together they sang the song, and a great storm came.

Soon the channel between the island and Banarong was filled with sand, and once more The People would be able to come to the Parra’woori for ceremony, and to tell the story of Kollgul and the false magician so that their children would know that if one tries to own something that is not truly his, then only evil can befall him.

Or her.