

VII. a
[17]

MYTHS AND LEGENDS
CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

VII 3 2
VII. 3

1. Aboriginal Stellar Myths
 - ✓ a. The Legend of the Two Brothers (Willilambi)
 - ✓ b. The Story of Nyeeruna (Orion) (2 accounts)
- ✓ 2. Giniga, Jamma and Kallia (Twilight Cove)
- ✓ 3. The Yog who would not share her Fire (near Twilight C.)
- ✓ 4. Moolanu the Fire Stealer (Bight Head)
- ✓ 5. The Legend of Warrdarrgani Gabbi (Boundary Dam)
Dhau-i of Warrdarrgani
6. The Legend of Ooldea Water
 - ✓ Collection of Ooldea myths (fragments)
 - ✓ Collection of Eucla Myths

THE LEGEND OF THE TWO BROTHERS

In the dhoogorr or dream times of long ago, the mulba (men) of Willilambi (Twilight Cove in the Australian Bight), lived in great fear and trouble. Walja the eagle-hawk who lived north was their enemy, and whenever he came near their wommu (fire, hearth, home) he shouted at them, and every time he shouted a wandi (boy) died. When he broke a branch off a baru (sandalwood tree) a wandi died, so that the Willilambi men had no boys for initiation gatherings.

They tried to spear Walja, but their spears were too soft, and would not pierce his hard skin. Also they were in great and constant fear that Walja would break the warda (big tree) which grew near Willilambi and which held up the sky, for if the warda were broken, the sky would fall down and darken the earth and all the men and meat food would be killed.

There were two big brothers, Badhu-wudha (right-handed) and Kurulba (left-handed) who were friends of the natives and they were very sorry to see Walja killing the boys with their shouting and branch breaking. One day Badhu-wudha sat down by Willilambi water and said to the natives, "We will kill the Walja who are killing and eating your wandi, and when we have killed them we will show you how to make good hard spears so that by and by you can spear all the walja that come to your wommu."

The two brothers had very strong spears (naldhara), hard and smooth and with very sharp points. They made a great wind come, and while it was coming over the koondan (plain) they made a big fire and hid in the trees near by. Darkness came along with the magic north wind and Walja and his yaggulu (woman) and two boys came in the big wind and sat down in the shade under a tree. Walja said, "Wommu ngannain (my home)", and he and the woman and boys sat down to eat. After they had eaten they slept, hiding themselves among the leaves of the trees.

Badhuwudha and Kurulba were watching them and presently Badhuwudha crept and crept quietly under the tree that held the sky up, for if he had gone quickly he might have

broken it. Badhuwudha and Kurulba came close to the sleeping Walja. They had their spears and spearthrowers ready, and right-handed Badhuwudha threw his at M'malu Walja (father eaglehawk) and left-handed Kurulba threw his at yaggulu Walja (mother eaglehawk). M'malu and yaggulu Walja cried out and flew away with the spears piercing their bodies.

By and by they came back for their boys, but Badhuwudha caught hold of the two and they held them and held them until they were dead and went made madu (up high, on top). The two eagles' children were very frightened and hid in the trees, but Badhuwudha brought them out and killed them on the plain. They then said to the Willilambi men, "There is your baru (meat). Cook it and eat it."

The name of the place where eaglehawks were killed was Cocilgamba and their bones are now bandong (stones, rocks) may be seen scattered and strewn about Wommundo (Eyre's Sandy Patch).

Then Badhuwudha made a great many bunggal (hard) trees come out of the ground, and he took the wood from these and showed the Willilambi men how to make spears and spearthrowers and said, "Now you will always have good strong spears and throwers that won't break, and you will no more fear Walja. I give the bunggal to the Willilambi men."

The Willilambi men were very glad and the old men said, "Our wommu is bunggal wommu now and we are brothers of the bunggal. We will carry the ngwan (shadow) of the warden inside us so that it will tell us when Walja are coming." So all the Willilambi men became bunggalaum (aum - contraction of wammu) and were always able to kill and eat walja. And the old men made yinmas (long carved boards) and burbing (bull-roarers) and the walga (markings) on the yinmas were the heart, ribs, stomach and entrails and tail of the walja.

By and by, when they had made the Willilambi men yaddoo (good, all right), Badhuwudha and Kurulba went up into the sky where they have been sitting down since dhoegoorr times, Badhuwudha at one side and Kurulba a little distance away. When

Willilambi old men died, Badhuwudha stretched out his right hand and took them up to his wommu and when women and children died, Kurulba reached down his left hand and drew them up. When an old man dies, they make him very bright and clear so that he will not be frightened, and the long right hand of Badhuwudha and the left hand of Kurulba can be seen stretched down to catch and bring the old men up.

White men call Badhuwudha and Kurulba Magellan Clouds, but the Willilambi men know they were the two big brothers, right-handed and left-handed, who saved the boys from the wicked Walja.

THE CONSTELLATION ORION

The constellation Orion is known to the Central Australian natives as Nyeeruna, a name which would seem to have some linguistic affinity with Orion.

Nyeeruna is a hunter, but of women only, a baffled and humiliated hunter, kept for ever at bay by Kambugudha (the "V" in Taurus - bull's head), the elder sister of Yugarilya, the Pleiades, whom Nyeeruna is ever trying to capture and possess, but they are so well guarded by their elder sister that Nyeeruna has never been able to reach them.

Kambugudha always stands naked before him, feet and legs wide apart, her left foot (Aldebaran) filled with fire magic, which she threateningly lifts each time she sees Nyeeruna's right hand (Betelgena) endeavouring to put red fire magic into his club, to hurl at her and so gain possession of her younger sisters. Kambugudha dares Nyeeruna with her whole body, and is so contemptuous of him and his vain personal display of feathered headdress and ochred body, string belt and whitened tassel that she has placed a line of puppies only between her and Nyeeruna (a faint waving line of stars between Orion and V in Taurus).

The puppies' fathers and mothers - all relations of Kambugudha - and her young sisters stand apart on roundabout tracks watching the game. The younger sisters (Pleiades) are very timid and when they see Nyeeruna's body reddened with fire and lust (radiations from nebulae?) fear comes upon them and they change into mingari (Moloch horridus) while Nyeeruna's rage lasts; but Kambugudha never changes her defiant attitude and she too can emit fire from her body, so that the red fire of her anger and her magic is so strong that it can subdue the fire magic Nyeeruna throws out, and when she advances towards him, lifting her left foot, she frightens him so greatly that the fire magic of his arm becomes faint and dies out for a while.

Again Nyeeruna's magic comes back in great force and brightness, and when Kambugudha sees the strong magic in arm and body, she calls to a father dingo (horn of the bull) to come and humiliate Nyeeruna and Babba the Dingo rushes over to Nyeeruna and

and swings him east and west by his middle and Kambugudha points at him and laughs but her frightened little sisters hide their heads under their little mountain devil neck humps until Babba loosens his hold and returns to his place again.

A great portion of the constellations and stars surrounding Orion form part of this great Central Australian myth, Procyon, Achernan, Taurus and others are all ready to help Kambugudha. They resent Nyeeruna's humiliating position and they laugh and are friendly with Kambugudha because of her care for her younger sisters, the Pleiades.

Even Joorrjoorr (Canopus) the owled nightjar, though only an onlooker, laughs his Joorrjoorr laugh as he watches Kambugudha blazoning all her charms before the baffled Nyeeruna, daring him for ever. Kara the red back spider (Rigel) is also redly shining, ready to bite Nyeeruna. All the animals and birds round and about jeer loudly when they see Babba the Dingo debasing Nyeeruna's manhood. Beera the moon also mocks at him whenever he sits down beside Kambugudha and her young sisters during his journeys to the west, and Nyeeruna loses his red fire and no sparks come from his body (nebulae) in his shame and humiliation.

On fine bright starlight nights, the old men of the Central groups watch the game between Kambugudha and Nyeeruna; the little line of star puppies between them brightens and laughs, and ^{Achernan} Achernan the mother dingo, standing at the end of her long row of puppies, joins in the laugh, and the old men re-tell the old story, and wink at Beera the moon whenever they see him sitting beside Kambugudha and her young sisters and leering and jeering at Nyeeruna's impotence.

Thus the myth has come down through the ages, but its special interest to ethnologists lies in its adaptation and re-adjustment to the real lives of the groups "owning" the myth. It has been "dramatised" as a performance for men only, and is acted as a comedy or satire before every young initiate. The myth is first recited to them with many unpublishable details and every night during their novitiate the "play" is performed. They see the Nyeeruna actor trying to touch Kambugudha

young sisters and they watch Babba the dingo disgracing Nyeeruna's manhood before the sisters, and see him crawl away in shame and ignominy. No woman can see or take part in the performance but within an enclosure, just about the distance away in which Nyeeruna and Kambugudna and her sisters "sit down" in the sky, a bush enclosure is made before the play begins and within this enclosure women and girls are hidden and raided at will by all the performers, including Nyeeruna. The women represent Kambugudna and her young sisters and the young novices are taught that they can raid young women at will when they have become men. Nyeeruna is shown throughout in the drama as a "shocking example" to all men.

During the performance songs are sung by the groups owning the special myth, the songs being accompanied by the beating of short heavy clubs on a prepared sand mound (mankind's first drum) the drum beating and singing being quick and loud or slow and soft as the drama proceeds, the frequent "raiding" of Kambugudna and her sisters being hailed with triumphant drumming and singing.

This performance usually begins when the young boys are considered ready for initiation, and at a period when Nyeeruna is absent from the night sky, and it may last until Nyeeruna becomes visible again.

Night or day every native of the group owning the myth can point out the exact position of Nyeeruna and the other stars and constellations. The young initiates are thoroughly taught Nyeeruna's story which they must never reveal to women. The moral of the story is meticulously explained by the brothers or guardians of each young novice.

The boys must look upon all women as their slaves, to do their will at all times and in all places, to "fetch and carry" for them throughout their lives.

A certain ruthless and savage power is thus instilled into the young novices as they fully grasp - through a wearisome repetition - the acted story of the constellation, and see it turned topsy-turvy in meaning and application, and when they realize their appalling power over all the womenkind and think of Kambugudna's successful defiance of Nyeeruna's advances, whatever cruelty is inherent in them is given full bent.

The myth and performance (both grossly phallic) cover a wide area of Central Australia and the western border, south towards the Great Plain's northern edge and east and southeast towards the Diamantina, Cooper and other rivers.

There is a religious instinct, though in a debased form, in this myth, as their only religious sentiments centre round phallicism. Totems, legends, initiation, all rites and ceremonies, are representations of phallic worship.

THE YOG WHO WOULD NOT SHARE HER FIRE

(Near Twilight Cove)

Away down at Willilambi, there lived an old woman who had fire, but she would not give any to the mulba (men) to cook their food. She lived by herself, and every time they went to her to get some from her, she hid the fire, making big holes by taking the sand out with her hands. Always she hid the fire in this way. Girr-girr and Karrgain (hawk and blue pigeon) asked her for the fire, but she hid it and said, "I have no fire." But they could see the smoke coming from under her armpits, and they knew she was telling lies. So they flew up very high, so high that they could not throw their shadow on the ground, and watched to see where the old woman put the fire.

They saw her looking all round and about to see if they were watching her, but they had flown so high she could not see their ngwan (shadow), and she stooped down to make a big hole in the sand to hide her fire. She dug down and down, throwing the sand out as she went down, and coming out every now and then to see if Karrgain and Girr-girr were about. They waited and waited high, high up until they could only see the old woman's back in the hole she had dug. Then they flew down quickly and speared her and caught the fire. All the sandhills along Willilambi Coast are the heaps of sand the old woman threw out every time she hid her fire.

Now when a nice blue smoke comes out of the fires the women make, they sing the following song in memory of the time when Karrgain and Girr-girr flew high up to watch where the old woman put her fire :-

Karrgain goolain bal nambal nambal,
Eembalalla geen'geen eembalalla geen'geen,
Eembalalla geen'geen eembalalla geen'geen.

(See the Karrgain going up and up in the sky where he went to watch and bring the fire to us so that we could cook our meat.)

MOOLANU THE FIRE STEALER

(Head of the Bight)

One day Dhoogeorr Mama (ancestral father) of Ilgamba Gabbi (Head Water of the Great Australian Bight) said, "Maalu and Kallaia (great red kangaroo and emu) smell the fire and run away. We will get Moolanu the carpet snake to hold our fire-stick and keep it alight while we go hunting."

Mama went to Moolanu and asked him to "look out" for their fire, and promised that when they brought back kooga (meat) they would share it with him. Moolanu said, "Yaddu," (good, all right). So the next time they went hunting they left their firestick with Moolanu. When they returned with Kallaia and Maalu kooga (kangaroo and emu meat) there was no sign of Moolanu and no fire. He had stolen the fire and taken it away to his own ngoora (camp).

Dhoogeorr Mama was very angry and said, "I will send Walja (eaglehawk) to bring back our fire and to spear Moolanu."

Walja started off, but he came back after going only a little way and said his arms were tired. Then Dhoogeorr Mama sent Kaang-ga (crow), but he got tired and only went a little way. Mama then told Yang-guna (white cockatoo) to go and steal the fire, but Yang-guna began to feed and would not go.

"Let Miribilyardi (little falcon) go," said Tham'u (grandfather). Miribilyardi got up quickly and went a long way, and by and by he saw the fire and Moolanu lying asleep beside it. Miribilyardi went close up, quietly, quietly, so that he should not wake Moolanu, and when he came quite near he lifted his spear and speared Moolanu and brought the fire back to Dhoogeorr Mama.

Mama then made a song about Miribilyardi, and Nung-ga (men - Bight term) always sang the song when making a fire after good hunting, and no nung-ga ever killed Miribilyardi because he brought back their fire from Moolanu when Walja and Kaang-ga and Yang-guna had refused to go for it, but they killed and ate eaglehawk and crow and white cockatoo wherever they found them.

THE LEGEND OF WARRDARRGANA GABBI

(BOUNDARY DAM)

Away on the western border of South Australia, 170 miles north of Eucla and about the same distance W.N.W. from Coldea on the East-West Railway Line, lies Warrdarrgana Gabbi, which Ernest Giles, the explorer, named Boundary Dam when he came upon it in 1875. It is a difficult water to find, as are most native waters, for there are no conspicuous natural features or leading marks whereby the locality could be described or recognised. Close by it is a low cliff of sandstone which, however, is not distinguished at a distance from the other sandhills in the vicinity. Mallee and spinifex cover the sandhills, interspersed here and there with small clumps of sheoak. Mulga, the term which we apply to many varieties of bush and tree for each of which the natives have a distinct name; sheoak and native plum (boorn-boorn) cover the wide valleys in the Coldea district; wardarrga, a species of mulga bearing an edible seed pod, grows luxuriantly about, also dharrulga (native apple), koorrugu-koorrugu, boggurda, tharrulyu, ngau-ilya, and many other species of mulga and acacia, each having its use in aboriginal domestic economy.

In dheogorr, or dream times, there was no water at Warrdarrgana, and when Ngannamurra (the mallee fowl), travelling north, came and sat down on the conderi (plain) between the thali (sandhills), he found the country good and the sand soft and firm and nice to walk on and build his kaang-gu (shelter) with. So he said, "I will stop a beena (lake, swamp) so that there will always be gabbi (water)." Ngannamurra took his gur-aara karli (boomerang made from needlebush) and threw it low over the plain. It went round and round and scooped out the sand and made a long wide waterhole like a ngannamurra ngogorn (egg). He said, "This is Wardarrgana beena and my gabbi and I will sit down here." So he built his camp and ate wardarrga and dharrulga and boendu (native hop) and womma (manna) and was balyanu (good, glad).

There was only one big waterhole (Wardarrga), so by and by (baarl) when Milbarli (short-tailed iguana) and Yoongga

(long-tailed black iguana), who were mulba (mates) for Ngannamurra, came to see him, they said, "We will make some more waterholes for you so that there shall be plenty of water always for mulba. Milbarli threw his boomerang and made Warranjurda waterhole and Yoonga threw his and Beeduring waterhole was made. And Ngannamurra said, "You are my mulba, and we will never fight or hurt each other, but we will always build our fires near each other and live together."

Maalu (silver-grey or white kangaroo) was also a thoonadha (friend), but when he came to Warrdarrgana, he had to make his camp further away than Yoongga and Milbarli. When he saw the waterholes that his friends had made he said, "I will make one too." So he lifted his koondi (club) and threw it and made a long narrow good hole, which he called Maalundu after himself. He wanted to make another one, but Milbarli and Yoongga, who were jealous (bala moguringinyi) of him, made their eenma (bullroarer) meera meera (shout loudly) all round and about him. Maalu heard the meeranyi (shouting) but could not see anyone, and he was greatly frightened and ran away allinjerra (north) and left the hole which is still called Maalurdu.

By and by Ngannamurra became Baadu (men) and they made a law and said, "We were Ngannamurra in dhoogoerr times and so all Ngannamurra must be our dhoogoerr brothers (totems) and we can eat them and give them to our friends to eat. Milbarli and Yoongga also became Waddi (men) and Waddi and Baadu are mulba just as they were in dhoogoerr times, and they can visit each other and not be afraid. When Waddi come to Warrdarrgana Baadu bring them plenty Ngannamurra, for that is the law that a man gives his friends his dhoogoerr kooga (meat), and Waddi give Baadu yoongga and milbarli, and they are comrades always and take part in each other's ceremonies.

Ngannamurra the mallee fowl makes his nest in the soft sand, and wherever it is found, there beside it will be the kardala dharrbungu (tunnelled nests) of Milbarli and Yoongga.