

THE STORY OF WANDAGARRA

If a lemmar nalma ngargalula cannot come to a pindana womba, nor a nyimberr nalma ngargalula to a Koojangoonoo womba, sometimes a womba may dream of a ngargalula that does not belong to his own children's class division, for there are four divisions or Classes amongst those northern people, and every ngargalula baby enters one of these divisions as soon as it is born, and when it is ngargalula and comes to its potential or chosen father in his dream, it knows its own and its father's division while a ngargalula, but when it becomes a baby it knows nothing like other babies. But as soon as it can hear and understand it is told which division it belongs to, and also the class or division of its father and mother and those of two of its grandparents which are different from its own. If a boy is a Kaimera, his father is Boorongoo, his mother Banaka, his mother's mother will be Kaimera like himself and so will his father's father, but his father's mother will be Paljeri and so also will his mother's father be Paljeri, and by and by when he gets a wife he must only take a Paljeri girl and when his little ngargalula children come, they will be Boorongoo, going into his own father's division again. So it always has been. But it has sometimes happened that a ngargalula will come who is of class differing from that of the children of the womba to whom he comes, as the following story will show :-

Wandagarra was a Banaka and one day was asleep beside a spring near <sup>Weerraginmarri</sup> Weerraginmarri when he dreamed he was at a place called Jerr-ngin-ngan (a spot within the township of Broome) and a ngargalula came to him there. Wandagarra said, "Yangi eebala jooa?" ("What is your father?") The ngargalula said, "Paljeri, eebala ngai Maljarra goon boocoo." ("Paljeri I father (my) belongs to Maljarragoon water.") Wandagarra knew that Maljarragoon belonged to a womba named Leeberr, who was often, as is the custom amongst them, called by the name of his birth ground.

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Wandagarra was a Banaka and one day was asleep beside a spring near Weerragin-marri when he dreamed he was at a place called Jerr-ngin-ngan (a spot within the township of Broome) and a spirit baby came to him there. Wandagarra asked, "What is your father?" The ngargalula said, "Paljeri, my father belongs to Maljarragoon water." Wandagarra knew that Maljarragoon belonged to a man named Leeberr, who was often, as is the custom amongst them, called by the name of his birth ground. Now Leeberr was a Paljeri and therefore the spirit baby was a Banaka and the little brother of Wandagarra. The baby spirit, however, followed him home and was carried by his wife, and by and by the baby was born and entered the class Paljeri, as his father was a Banaka.

When the baby could walk, Wandagarra met Leeberr (or Maljarragoon) at a Wallungarri ceremony, and Wandagarra

said, showing his boy to Maljarragoon, "That is your ngargalula son. I stole him from you." Maljarragoon looked at the boy and said, "He is Paljeri now, and I cannot take him back from you." As he watched the little fellow running round among his playmates, Maljarragoon continued, "He is not like me, he is like you. I see him walk like you." And so the boy remained a Paljeri and stayed with his Banaka father, and by and by, when he grew up, he was given a Kaimera girl for his own wife and his spirit children were Banaka like his own father. Neither man nor baby can ever turn back into a ngargalula.

The ngargalula who are in the spirit land below the sea often come up to the beach to play with the Koolibel (turtles) who are their special friends. Wandagarra's own totem was the koolibel, for his father had dreamed that he had seen him playing with a koolibel on the beach. One day, when Wandagarra was partly initiated, he went down to the beach to catch a turtle. He saw one lying asleep on the beach, and walked quietly along towards it in order to turn it over on its back, when he saw a spirit baby in the water reaching its hand over the koolibel whose shell it seized and thus dragged it back into the water. Being a sorcerer, Wandagarra could see the spirit doing this.

The ngargalula enters into the class into which it is born, whatever its class or division its class may have been as ngargalula, but when it comes to the man in his dreams, it always gives him the title of relationship between them. It will call him father if it is a Kaimera ngargalula and he is a Boorongu, kogga (mother's brother) if it is Kaimera and he is Banaka, babbula (brother) if it is Kaimera and he is Kaimera too, and tchallal if he is Paljeri and it is Kaimera, for it is his ingalbu or youngest brother-in-law. Yet when it is born it goes into the division that the father's other children belong to.

Sometimes two ngargalula, a boy and a girl, or perhaps two boys, will come to the man, but often only one of them will be carried by his wife. By and by, however, the ngargalula girl will come, for she will want to see her little brother,

or the little boy may come, and may be either carried by the same mother, or by another mother, but he will come to the same father, or he may not come to him again as ngargalula, but he will recognise it as his own, for it had come to him with its brother.

What will happen if a boy ngargalula comes to a man and a girl baby is born instead? "That could not happen," said Wandagarra, "if I see a boy, the boy must come. Sometimes a baby girl is promised or betrothed to a man before even its ngargalula has come to its father, and when the ngargalula comes and is a boy instead of a girl, the young man has to wait, as when it came to the father it was a boy ngargalula and he could not change it."