

WOGGAL, THE SERPENT HEALER

In Nyitting times, kura, kura, Bladwa was a jungar and lived at Nyeerrgu Water (Victoria Plains). He had two korda (wives) who always gathered warrain (edible root), jagat, joolal and many other roots, baiyu (yamia fruit) and other fruits and berries and yorna, karder (stump tailed lizard and iguana) and any small game that they could kill with their wanna (digging sticks) and Bladwa was a very successful meat hunter and always came back with goomal (opossum), warr (female kangaroo), yonggar (male kangaroo) or some other meat food, so they fed well and were fat and strong.

Bladwa had the Woggal (carpet snake) for his borungur (elder brother - totem) and his borungur was his daaj (meat food), but he never killed the young woggal, for they were his koolongur (children) and the young woggal or other borungur must not be killed or else the janga which always looks out for its own kind will take them all away, and then jungar will have no more of that daaj. So Bladwa only killed the full grown woggal, and just because it was his own borungur, it was his favourite food.

One day Bladwa went out hunting, leaving his two korda at the kala (fire, home) and before he had gone very far he came upon a yonggar and warr, both of which he speared. He was carrying them home, when a booyunggur jungar ran out of some bushes where he had been hiding and speared Bladwa, the spear going through his ribs. Bladwa threw the kangaroos on the ground, broke the spear where it was sticking out of his body, and ran to his kala where his korda were. They tried to pull the spear out of his body, but the protruding point gave them no firm hold, and so they pulled and pulled in vain, the tears falling down their cheeks from their sorrow for korda's wound. At length Bladwa said to them, "You can't pull it out, so I will go to the pool where the janga woggal sits down, and will get my borungur to cure me."

He went to the pool where the Woggal was, a very deep pool, with a big log stuck in it, and when he reached the edge of the gabbi (water) he called out, "N'ga (mother)" and as soon as he called

a great whirlpool stirred the water and then another and another, and presently the Woggal's head showed itself and then part of its body which had feathers growing down its back. It rose straight up out of the water and looked round to see who had called out to it. Bladwa walked along the log to the spot where the Woggal was, and as he walked the water rose higher and higher over the log. When he got near the Woggal the water was up to his chest. He stepped on to the Woggal's back, and as soon as he had reached her, two more big whirlpools came as the Woggal started away with him, and then the Woggal went down into the water which rose up and covered Bladwa's eyes and his head and then the water was quiet and smooth again, for Bladwa and the Woggal had disappeared.

Before he reached the Woggal, Bladwa turned to his yogga who were watching him from the bank and holding up three fingers and pointing to where the sun sits down in the afternoon, Bladwa thus notified them that he would return to them on the afternoon of the third day.

N'ga took him down and down to her maia (hut, shelter) at the bottom of the pool and laid him down on a feather bed which was made of the feathers which it cast off every boornoor (autumn) and then the woggal pulled out the gija (spear) and put its tongue into the wound and cleaned it and cleaned it and lay round and round Bladwa to keep him warm and safe. There were other woggal at the bottom of the pool and some of these tried to bite Bladwa, but his N'ga prevented them and wrapped herself round him so that they could not touch him, and licked and licked his wound until he felt himself quite gwabba ("good") again.

At the end of the three days, Bladwa said to the Woggal, "N'ga, I want to go back to my kala and my yogga. I am now gwabba and my yogga will be waiting for me, for I told them I would return in three suns." So on the afternoon of the third sun, while the yogga watched the water, they saw the whirlpools coming again and after the second one, Bladwa's head appeared and he rose up and looked to the spot where he had told his women to wait for him and he saw them and got off the Woggal's back on to the log again, and

walked over the log to his wives and went with them to his kala. His yogga looked for his wound, but it had quite healed and Bladwa was gwabba again.

After Bladwa had been healed in the pool by the N'ga Woggal, the pool became winnaitch (forbidden, sacred) and no stranger (booyung-gur) could go there and drink. If he did he would surely die. And all kaleepgur (people belonging to the district) who passed that pool had to strew rushes at the spot where Bladwa came to the bank after he had ben healed by the Woggal. If they neglected to perform this ceremony as they passed the pool, they very soon became ill and died.

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district was blind, "but he could work evil just the same". In the Victoria Plains district the female woggal was the borungur or totem of some families there, and the following legend shows her healing one of her human totem kin, and keeping the hostile woggal from harming him :-

Bladwa was a Nyeerrgoo (Victoria Plains) yoongar and was woggal borungur (snake totemist). One day he went out hunting and killed two kangaroos with two spears and was carrying them home when another blackfellow came out of the bush and speared him, the spear going through his ribs. He threw the kangaroos down, broke the spear off and ran to his kala (fire) where his two women were. They tried to pull the spearhead out, but could not, and so Bladwa said he would go and get his woggal to cure him. He went down to the pool where the woggal was and called out, "'N'ga" (mother).

Presently a great whirlpool stirred the water, and another and another, and then the woggal's head and part of its body rose out of the water. It had feathers growing down its back. It looked about to see who had called it. Bladwa walked down to the spot where the woggal had come up and as he went along the water rose higher and higher. When the water had reached his chest, he was close up to the woggal, and he stepped on its back, and two more whirlpools came as the woggal sank with him to the bottom of the pool. He told his wives, who were watching him from the bank, that he would be back in three days, and he pointed with his hand to the place where the sun would be when he returned.

The woggal took him to her maia, and he lay on a feather bed made of the feathers which she cast every year. 'N'ga took the spear out of his wound, put her tongue into the wound, cleaned it, and lay round and round Bladwa.

There were other woggal down there and they tried to bite Bladwa but his mother woggal prevented them.

At the end of three days, Bladwa said to the woggal, "'N'ga, I want to go back to my kala and my women," and so on the afternoon of the third day while the women watched the water, the

whirlpools came again, and after a little Bladwa's head came up, and then he looked and saw his wives, and came to them over the log, and went to his kala, and his wound was quite healed.

The pool where Bladwa went down is winnaitch, and no strange natives can go there. The kalleepgur (home people) always strew rushes at a certain spot on their journey past the pool. If they neglected to do this, they would very soon get ill and die.