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Kwobba-Keip Boya: The place of pretty water and rocks

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Kwobba-Keip Boya

The Place of Pretty Water and Rocks

A Nyungar Interpretation of Bunbury Environs, Western Australia

Compiled by Glenys Collard
Living Things

Sun, moon, stars, milky-way
Trees, land, hills
Rivers, rocks, water holes
Wind, rain
People

Everything has a meaning
Everything has a story
People

A story relating to every event
everything happening

The lores were set
the rules laid down

They've always been 'ere
they're still 'ere an'
will always be here
Long time ago
when we was little
fullahs
our fathers used to
take us 'round
all 'round
this country
our country
when it started gettin' hot
we'd start travellin' toward the sea
we would start lookin' for food
food
that the sea bought in
gatherin' fresh food
for when
we would meet up with other Nyungar families
we'd share stories
trade tools
sing songs
share dances
an' have
special ceremonies
when the cold winds started to blow
we would start
our travel back up towards the hills
soon the rains would come
we needed to
hunt kangaroo an' possum
to make rugs and cloaks from their skins
we'd spend time
at different places longer
when the old fullahs did their business
they would sing us songs
tell us yarns 'round the fire
an' tell us yarns 'bout our old fullahs
'bout the places they'd camp
the country they'd walk
they'd talk about the Waakal
and how it keeps the water fresh
so that we have plenty to drink
they told us where we can walk
where we can't what we can say
what we can't what we can do
and what we can't they told us why some birds sing and why some cry
why some have colours
an' others don't they taught us how to look after our land
they'd show us our boundaries
and told us never to cross over
without permission they told us what would happen if we did
they taught us to be proud
they taught us to stand tall
they taught us to look after our land and that our land would look after us
Kurak - Mountain Duck

Nyunneruk - Grey Duck

Kuljak - Swan
Kulima - Swamp Hen

Wyan - Heron
The Wirlo is a messenger bird known also as the death bird. When the wirlo comes to our camp he comes for a reason: he might come to tell us that someone is very very sick or that someone close to us or our family has died.

Wirlo starts cryin', cryin', cryin', makin' the hair on our neck stand up. Wirlo starts flappin' his wings flappin', flappin', flappin', flappin', flappin'. He begins dancin' on one leg dancin', dancin', dancin', dancin', dancin', 'round 'round 'round 'round the edges of the fire.

Flick flickin', 'an flickin', flickin' ashes into the air, rockin' his head side to side side to side side to side cryin', cryin', cryin', cryin', cryin'.
The Crow and the Magpie

The crow an the magpie
once were brothers
they were always
jealous of each other
afraid one
was gettin'
moving more than the other
ty they quarrelled
an' fought
for years
an' years
finally
they were
told to leave
the camps
by the old fullahs
an' to go
deep into the
bush and sort out
their differences
once they had done
this
they could return
to their families
where
they would live
happily
together
crow an' magpie
left for the
bush
grumblin'
an growlin'
blamin' each other
as they
went
their families
waited
waited
an'
waited
for their
return
one mornin'
when the sun had just
begun to rise
crow an' magpie
came crawlin'
into the main camp
wounded
an'
bleedin'
rugged
an' very sick
their families
'woke an'
ran to them
takin' them
into their huts
after
restin' several days
crow and magpie
told the old fullahs
of the savage
fight that they had
in the
bush
magpie told of how
crow pushed
him into the fire
durin' the
fight
an' burnt his
coat
this is why magpie
now has
white markin's
crow and magpie
could no longer
be brothers
they had to go their
separate ways
they
still fight
and
bicker
when they meet
or
come close
together
Wardung - Crow

Kulbardi - Magpie
Waitj - Emu
The Djidi-Djidi

Djidi-Djidi visits our camp
he sits and watches
waits
an' waits
waitin'
for the right time
the time
when he can catch
us off guard
dancin'
an' dancin'
'round
an'
'round
whistlin' as he moves

he's cheeky
an' daring
coming
closer
an'
closer
to the camp
drawin' attention
to himself
by
whistlin' louder
an'
louder
whistlin' an' whistlin'

whistlin'
out to
the little Nyungar kids
callin'
callin'
an'
callin'
'em further
an'
further
away from the main
camp

but
we know 'im
and we look out
for 'im
lookin'
listenin'
an' watchin'
watchin'
out for
our little
fullahs
making sure they
aren't lead
away by
'im
Fire

Fire is an essential part of Nyungar life. Old fullahs used it for many things an' still do. A fire must always burn and be kept burnin' for many many reasons. One reason was to keep evil spirits away also to talk to the dead fullahs through the fire askin' them for their help askin' for them to come an' fix them up when they're real real crook Nyungars would lay 'round the fire for three or four days crook and believe that when they started getting better that it was from the fire the fire an' the dead fullahs they was like a doctor cured they would talk to the fire believing it cured them giving them the strength to go on an' on and on.
Kaarl - Fire
Woily - Woylie

Budi - Kangaroo Rat
Goanna and Echidna

Goanna and Echidna like all birds an' animals are killed an' prepared in very special ways before being cooked an' eaten.

We are taught these rules as we grow up we watch our Elders an' how they prepare 'em.

If we don't follow the rules when preparing the foods then we can't eat it.

If we were to eat it we could become very very sick or even die.
Nyingarn - Echidna

Karda - Goanna
Waakal is the Nyungar creator it created the hills the birds animals an’ rivers it also created the baby Waakals sometimes called carpet snake or fresh water snake it is believed that where there is fresh water there is a Waakal the Waakal has to keep that water fresh an’ doesn’t allow anything to spoil it like salt

deep within the earth Waakal is a Waakal is killed or dies a fresh water-hole dries up Nyungars are taught at an early age to respect and look after the Waakal and that the Waakal will in return look after them there is no one Waakal there are many many Waakals all over Nyungar country keeping the water fresh fresh for us to drink
Karri - Crab
Paperbark was used for many many things. Bark was stripped from the tree and placed on the ground to lay on. Bark was also used for food. Food was placed on the bark and eaten. Also, food was wrapped in paperbark so it could be carried in a bag.

Black boy rushes were a main source for building mia mia's. And the rushes were laid on the ground for sleeping on. Rushes were also used for sweeping the ground 'round the camp. The black boy stick was also used for lighting fires by rubbin' them together. Rubbin' the sticks until smoke appeared 'an then a spark made a flame.
Budi - Kangaroo Rat

Djarryl - Jarrah

Balka - Blackboy

Mordong - Paper Bark
The kangaroo is a very important animal and is one that Nyungars used for many things. They used the skin to make cloaks and rugs. All parts of the meat are specially prepared and eaten.

Sinews were used to bind together things like axe heads and handles or used like a glue. It's heated up and used to stick different parts of tools together. Sinews and bone are also used to sew together cloaks and rugs and pouches. They're also used for making carry bags for food or for carrying children in.
DECEMBER 1836

The numerous and well beaten paths near the bank of the estuary indicated the constant presence of considerable numbers [of people]. Indeed, nowhere had I hitherto seen, even on the Murray, where the natives are numerous, such distinct paths as here (p. 75) ...

As the night advanced ... I went to sleep in full security, although aware that I was completely in the power of the natives if they wished to injure me, as our place of repose was clearly defined by the bright flaming fire of the Blackboy logs we had heaped up to counteract the effects of the fog rising with the night from the low wet swamp on our left, and the stinking mud and seaweed on the edge of the Estuary on our right (76-77). ....

On the following morning ... we proceeded along the edge of the Estuary for some miles, partly along the sand which was here hard and firm, and partly along a Native path near the edge. .... As we advanced party after party of Natives joined us, hallooing, screeching, and receiving us with most boisterous symptoms of joy, much of which I would willingly have dispensed with, as every accession of numbers occasioned halt to explain who we were, where we came from, where we were going to, what we had in our bags et ctr et ctr. (78-79) ....

Seldom during the day had I fewer than one hundred Blacks about me, and often nearer two hundred. (79) ...

... we came upon the Collie River which flows into the Estuary at a low flat point, in two branches of considerable depth and width, the only way of crossing which was by the bar formed at its mouth, where the bottom is of hard sand. .... A long and tiresome wade brought us to the little island in the centre of the river from whence we again struck out into the Estuary and passed to the left bank by the sandy bar ... (p. 80)

On the left bank of the Collie I found about 150 natives assembled to receive us, belonging to another tribe. These, in addition to about a dozen followers from the former party, all joined me and we advanced towards the Preston together. (p. 81) ....

After following the edge of a bay for about a mile and a half, we turned into the Bush by a well beaten path a little to the left ... We passed through a magnificent tract of land for about two miles, abounding with most luxuriant grass, growing under flooded Gums, Stinkwood and Broom, on a soil rather light in places but in others black and rich. I have as yet seen no place better calculated for a diary or arable farm than this, lying between two considerable rivers ... Through this luxuriant meadow country we passed, coming several times upon the Preston which winds very much, nearly enclosing in its bends some large and rich alluvial flats. (p. 81) ....

A little above this the path we were following through the rich low flats brought us to the Native crossing place ... About a mile higher up .... I found a crossing place ... I had to ascend, unloading the horses and making the Natives carry all the things over (p. 82).

I halted for about an hour and a half on the left bank of the Preston, in a rich flat where my horses soon filled themselves with grass .... A large party of Natives collected round me during my halt and sat down in circles round the fires they had kindled, watching all my movements most carefully and making at the same time an overwhelming noise, talking and laughing most vehemently (p. 83).

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