

In Weejlara or Dhoogoorr times, the long ago dream times, the country where Ooldil-nga gabbi now "sits down" was as desolate as the great wini (plain) which edges it, and as waterless. There were no trees at Ooldil-nga, only murnda-murnda (earth, soil) everywhere. All the animals and birds were nunga (men) in those far off days.

Ginniga the native cat and Beera the Moon had been sulky with each other for a long time and had been fighting and running away, fighting and running away, but always coming back again to fight on the murnda. One day Beera hit Ginniga with a wij-wij (heavy club-like boomerang) and made his nose bleed. Ginniga ran a long way and made a blood-red karu (creek) all the way. He sat down at the end of the karu and all the ground over which he ran was red with his blood and now it is murdarba (red ochre) which the Ginniga munga can sell to their friends. Ginniga speared Beera and Beera ran to Dhoorinya and sat down there and you can see a big mardargi (circle) where Beera sat down until his wounds were healed.

By and by when Ginniga had rested he got up again and went after Beera, and standing in front of him, Ginniga moordi, moordi, moordi (stamped his foot), challenging Beera to fight again, and they fought and fought until Beera was killed. "Yoogan (standing, Ginniga killed Beera," and Beera turned into stone and all his eelpa (dogs) ran away.

Now Ginniga stood for law and order in Dhoogoorr times and when Wilba (species of wallaby) would not stop in their own murnda but went round in big mobs spoiling the ngalda gabbi (water root mallee) and letting the water run to waste, Ginniga was wala (sulky). One day a big mob (boolga waddi) of Wilba came to Ginniga and moordi moordi'd (challenged) him. "All right," said Ginniga, "I'll fight you, but I will give you my koorda manthu (entrails) to eat, for you must be hungry." Ginniga was Mamu (sorcerer), so he took out his koorda amanthu and gave some to each wilba and as they ate they died, for it was mobburn kooga (magic meat). Three of them, Dhadel,

Malaguli and Mamu ran away leaving their kajji behind. Ginniga took all the kajji (spears) of the dead Wilba, all made of different warda (wood) and the bungala kajji he threw south, and bungala spears and karli (boomerangs) and miro (spearthrowers) are now made by bungala munga. He threw bilbagooroo west and bilbagooroo kajji now come from there. Oojan and kalliwarra he sent north and yaggala, koorrugu, jindu and ngabbarli and kajji east and all the kajji turned into trees and the murnda was covered with them, and that is why some trees have mai (vegetable foods) and some have gabbi (water), because all the kajji were different. Ginniga kept three spears and went after Dhadel, Malaguli and Mamu, and he chased them and chased them a long, long way. They tried to make nests (tunnelling species of wallaby) and threw up the murnda quick, quick, quick, but Ginniga caught them up before they could hide in the nests and he speared them and killed them, and the earth they threw up is now called Wilba (Ooldea Range), a little rockhole called Kara marks the spot where they died, and the hills near it are called Wilba-murdu.

When Ginniga had killed all the Wilba he heard his koorda manthu talking, and he said, "My brother wants me." He walked a long way and saw a lame jinna (track, footprint). "My brother's foot is minga (sick)" he said. He sat down by a rockhole will Kang-gal (afternoon) and he called the water Ganga gabbi. Then he went further and came to another waterhole which he called Beeran-garra. He slept there and early next morning he saw smoke, and by and by he met two old men carrying a firestick and a nyurdi (a small bag) but he did not hurt them. He tracked his brother's jikka and at last he found his lame brother whom Beera had speared. Ginniga was goonbu (glad) he had killed Beera and went back to his kaanga (fire).

Now there were trees of as many kinds as there were Wilba kajji all about, and the murnda that the three Wilba had thrown up were made into hills, but there was only a little gabbi, burnda gabbi (rockholes), ngalda gabbi (mallee root water) and koolo gabbi (sheoak water roots).

One day Karrbiji (species of marsupial) started from a long way weelurarra (west) with a bagginya or kanyala gooloo (kangaroo skin bag) full of gabbi. He was travelling Yulbari (south), but Ngabbula the spike-backed lizard followed him up, and Karrbiji turned a little bit Allinjerra (north) and then Koggarara (east) with his bagginya still full. He went aslong, long way Koggarara and then turned Yulbari again and sat down on a little biring (sand) mound, and scratched and scratched until he had made a nice hollow to put the gabbi in. He poured out some of the water and said, "Ooldil," ("Here I shall stay,") and sat down beside it. The water was on the surface so that everyone could see it. Presently he heard rong-guin minna (whistling) and he cried out, "Who is that?" and he covered up the water quickly with biring. Ngabbula came along whistling and frightened Karrbiji so much that he said to himself, "Ooldil binna," ("Staying here is no good,") and he picked up his bagginya and ran weelurarra.

He sat down near the edge of the wini (plain) and scooped out a big deep hollow in the biring and emptied all the gabbi into it. Again he said, "Ooldil-nga," ("I will stop here,") and he sat down beside the gabbi and saw the wilba and warda (hills and trees) that Ginniga had made and he said, "Ginniga yaddu (good)." (Yaddu is coast term - balya.)

Kallaia (emu) were the first to see Karrbiji's gabbi and they ran quickly to get it, and then came Ginniga and Ngannamurra (malle hen) and Wai-urda (opossum) and Burna (long-tailed iguana) and Maalu and Waru (kangaroo) and many more, all came to drink the water that Karrbiji had brought and they sat down beside Karrbiji and were goonbu (glad) for the yaddu water. Karrbiji too was very happy, until one day he again heard rong-guin (whistling). "Oh," he said frightened, "that is Ngabbula coming," and he again covered the gabbi with biring so that Ngabbula should not see it and then Karrbiji took his empty bagginya and went away Allinjerra. Ngabbula followed him up, thinking he still had the gabbi, and when Karrbiji had gone a long way he dropped

his bagginya and it turned into a burnda (stone) and the bagginya burnda is still where it fell. Karrbiji went on still further Allinjerra and turned into burnda. Yambadhu (far away) he went and Ngabbula never found him. Kallaia, Wai-urda and Ginniga were all very angry with Ngabbula for frightening Karrbiji away from his gabbi, and Kallaia said, "I will track Ngabbula and kill him when I find him." Kallaia tracked a long way and could see the jinna (tracks) of Karrbiji and Ngabbula, and Karrbiji was always ahead. Ginniga and Wai-urda followed behind, for they were not so strong or so quick as Kallaia.

By and by Kallaia came up to Ngabbula and challenged him by stamping his feet and lifting them high off the ground (moordi moordi). Ngabbula stopped and fought, and Kallaia speared him and all Kallaia's long spears stuck in Ngabbula's back, and Kallaia killed Ngabbula allinjerra way.

When Ginniga and Wai-urda came up, Ngabbula was dead, with all the spears sticking out, and when he turned into Ngabbula (lizard) again, all the kajji still stuck out of his back. Ngabbula is always sulky and goes koojoo (alone) rong-guin mina (whistling) when anyone comes near him.

By and by Kallaia, Wai-urda and Ginniga turned into stone and if a strange nunga goes near the burnda, Kallaia and his thoonadha (friends) will stand up and the strange nunga will very soon die. When they were all changed into nunga again everyone knew where Karrbiji gabbi was, and first the Kallaia nunga sat down beside it and then the burna and ngannamurra and ginniga men, and all the others who were thoonadha in Dhoogoorr times continued friendly when they changed into nunga again. Jiwin-wongga, Oolawongga, Ngallea wongga, Jiji wongga, were all kallaia men, but they called each other by these names; jiwin, oola, jiji, and bilyi all mean "boy" and each little group used its own name and was known by it. There was one word for meat food - kooga - which all the thoonadha used, and no matter what the local group name of each was they all called themselves Koogurda; Ngallea, Ginniga, Ngannamurra, Weerongu, Wong-gai-i, Jiwin, Oola, Ngang-gali and Kaiali, all were Koogurda nunga. All these could

come and drink from the Ooldil-nga gabbi, and each could scratch out his own little waterhole in the biring and cover it up when he went away. The water was always minyaru (cold) in Kon'baring (hot) time. The Jiwin kallaia men were camped always close by the water and they made a well for themselves in the biring and kept it open as Karrbiji had made it when he first came to Ooldil-nga.

Marda wongga, Rabbuni and Yarunda nunga came from the east, Yulbari, and Walba from the south, and Kaiali, Munjinji, Kalur and Badu from the west, and Ngallee wongga from the northwest. Sometimes the gabbi made Marda wongga or Badu sick and then a Jiwin Mamu (sorcerer) performed ung-gariri (rubbing stomach with nulu - magic stone - or jalyir - white magic stone) and the minga ones were soon all right again. From wanmayambadhu and weenduru (far away) nunga came to Karrbiji gabbi when digil (drought) dried all the burnda gabbi, and amongst them were many ngadharri (strange) nunga who had heard of Ooldil-nga and these brought dhula (flints), warrja (string), karrarr (pearlshell) and many other goods to pay for the water and for their sojourn there, so that Karrbiji gabbi was known a long way allinjerra, yulbariri, weelurarra and koggararra. Koogurda all joined together when big mobs came from far away, so that if a fight should occur, all the thoeradha were in one mob and were always ready to defend their gabbi with kajji and koondi. Many ngadharri brought their boys for weela and kulu ("initiation") and thus made a claim to be included amongst the thoeradha, and many different wongga (speech, dialects) were brought by them to Ooldil-nga gabbi.

Each nunga ate his own dhoogoorr food (totem) and gave it to his friends. Kallaia were eaten by kallaia men, ngannamurra by Badu, for it was their dhoogoorr (totem), the Wong-gai-i wongga ate Ginniga, the Yairunda caught koong-gara (bird, hawk or pigeon) and gave it to Jiwin kallaia, and exchange of dhoogoorr mai (vegetable) or kooga always made for peace amongst the various mobs. Sometimes a grievance arose because the exchange of food was not considered equal, and now and then a great fight

resulted from this cause, and there were many deaths and those who ate their dead cooked their brothers, etc., and shared the food with their thoonadha. The Badhu drank the blood of those they killed, and sucked in their lips and made a great noise while drinking it, and there was one very fierce nuntha (bad) mob, the Ka-lur wongga, who came from "this side" (east) of the Badu. Ka-lur were kanyala (kangaroo) men, and though they brought many boys for kulu and weela, they were angry because they had not any gabbi so good as Karrbiji gabbi, and they spat and mouthed at the kallaia men, and dug holes for themselves without permission in the biring, but they only got salt water, for Karrbiji kept the good water for the thoonadha. Then Ka-lur were more angry, for they had to come to the kallaia men to get the good water. They were a fierce arrogant tribe, and stole or killed fat men, women and girls, and cooked them in a nuntha (bad) way, by making a deep hole in the sand or burnda, and putting the dead nunga or wia (woman) sitting up in the hole, and then when the meat was cooked they took it out of the hole quick, quick, and made it spin round and round, so fiercely did they handle it. Nyin-ain (sitting) Kalur cooked nunga. The kaiali wongga ate girls and cooked them face downwards, their foreheads resting on a hot burnda and they swallowed the flesh without biting it with their kardidi (teeth).

Ka-lur and Kaiali killed nunga, wiana and gijjara (men, women and children) and ate them even when there was plenty dhoogoorr kooga, and were not like the other nunga who only ate those who had been killed in fight, or when there had been no kooga for some time and they were meat hungry, or when young boys were sick and wanted "sister" food to make them strong and well.

On the steep sandhills round Karrbiji's gabbi the visiting nunga camped, each in his own place, Mardu, Guyani, Rabbuni, Wirongu and their thoonadha on the east side, Yulbareri and Walba on the south and southeast, Munjinji, Wong-gai-i, Kalur and Badu on the west. Ngallee, Oola and Jiwin sat down by the water on the north side.

Always the gabbi was there in abundance and always covered up when the tribes left, except the well the Jiwin kept open. Besides the abundant gabbi and kooga, there were bardi and mai in great plenty, bundi (acacia), boorrgu, malungarri, ngau-ilya, and kilguwara (species of mulga) and bardi (grubs) and gabbi from yaggala, ngabbari, jindu (mallee sp.) and kooli (sheoak) and womma (manna) from ngabbari, and there were yalda dhaddagoola (native apples) and nyoorongil (parakilya) and booya (a sweet-tasting grassy plant.)

Ooldil-nga munga had therefore plenty of food and water always, and they could go to Ooldilbinna gabbi too, for Ooldilbinna and Ooldil-nga gabbi are "all one" - they meet under the ground and only come up in the two biring where Karrbiji made the hollows, and though they are far away from each other it is the same water in both, karrbiji gabbi, tasting just the same, and coming up in the same way. When the Kallaia munga went hunting a long way they did not have to take weera (scoops) with water, for Ginniga had put gabbi into the trees and Kallaia knew where the gabbi warda (trees) were.

Ngadharri (strangers, strange tribes) were always sending magic amongst them. Magic went inside the women who were carrying the little babies that had gone inside them after first telling their future fathers or uncles (mother's brothers) that they were coming, and the magic cut the bidi (sinews) of the baby so that when it was born, its joonda (thighs) never grew and it had to crawl about on its marra (hands) always, or it injured the boy babies so they could not be made kulu and weela men, or it twisted their heads and made them wobbaluru (insane). Ooldil-nga munga sent back fire magic and blood magic and many other kinds, so that when a ngadharri succeeded in putting magic inside a kallaia man, magic went back again, and to and fro, it was always working. So much kooga was always obtainable at Ooldil-nga that babies and others were only killed when the former were "too many" and when the latter had been wounded in fight, or when little babies were stealing the fat off their brothers. The Koogurda were a big mob, for many claimed Ooldil-nga as their dhoogoorr gabbi.

And so they lived and thrived, watching daily for the light smokes that told them thoonadha were coming, or the heavy smokes that prepared them for the ceremonial visit of large tribes, or the numerous small signs that warned them of magic coming.

There was no world but their own, and there were no other people but those of their own colour, thoonadha or ngadharri as these might be. They knew every animal and every living thing that moved on, over or under their own country and they heard tales from the north of burna (iguana) who were so large and so magic that they could swallow a whole family at a meal. (alligators?) From the great wini south of them they heard the roarings and rumblings of the huge snake (kulai' ganba) that lived on the wini and made moonjungarra (blowholes) all along its warri (roads) underneath the wini, through which it boomed at them or tried to suck them in as it inhaled its oorna (stinking) breath in passing. They could see the ground move up and down, up and down, as the kulai' ganba travelled underneath the nurnda, roaming about always and frightening them with the big noises it made at the moonjungarra. Sometimes it put its head out of the moonjungarra and spat out burnda (stones) and sucked them in again. They could not stop it from travelling over their country, but they feared it too much to try and find its kaanga (camp, home, fire) on the wini, and so they never saw where it lived. Many tales came to them from the east of a tribe of great eelpa (dogs) whose daily food was nunga, and from the west and northwest came strong magic, but there also came beautiful karrarr (pearlshell) and sacred kalleegooroo (bullroarers) which when laid on the boys' wounds quickly healed them and made them grow strong men; and new dances came to them through the Badu of Wardarrgana (Boundary Dam) who were thoonadha of the Wong-gai-i, or perhaps from the Wanmaring wongga of Jinyilg (Eucla) through their Yulbari thoonadha. When the Wong-gai-i ginniga visited them there was always friendly meeting and feasting and parting, for Ginniga kept the laws in Dhoogorr times, and were the dhoogorr thoonadha of the Kallaia nunga.



And so their lives went on. Their religion was Fear, fear of magic, of thunder, of lightning, fear of the awful Unknown that lived in eenma and koondain (churinga of Spencer) whose roaring voices were only understood by the Mamu who whirled them round and round to make them talk, and who noticed the smallest wrong doing and sent magic punishment for every breach of native law. Sometimes when the thunder and "lightning god" crashed and burned around them, or when bigger booming sound than usual came up from the angry Kulai ganba, and it seemed as if he would tear up the ground and come and eat them, some male or female Mamu, with spear or digging stick, went into the open, and thrusting the weapon above, around and below, remonstrated with the noisy god, telling it they had done no wrong, beseeching it to go elsewhere, continuing their efforts until the noise abated. Anything unusual in the elements, in tree, plant, animal or bird, brought the Fear God before them, and at times propitiatory offerings were made to subdue its wrath. When a star fell or a meteor, and they found meteorites or obsidian on the spot where the star had fallen, this was taken as a sign of grace, and was endowed with magic power and used in healing or killing as needed.

And then, long before Flinders and his men were seen by the Yulbari wongga of Fowlers Bay district, or the warda munga of Kooluna (wombat men of West Coast, S.A.) rumours were carried from north and west of still more fearsome monsters, mawgun-spirit (white) men - walking like themselves, and having ngarn-goor (beards), but "different" and having a fire magic that sent burnda (bullets) inside munga or kooga or anything the magic firestick (gun?) pointed at. How the rumours spread, and gained in the spreading! Horned mawgun, mawgun with tails, mawgun with great kooroo (eyes) that they could draw out of their heads and put back again (spectacles?), awful mawgun! and camp and after camp along the route of the rumors surrounded itself with its greatest magic - fire - which it lighted

at all points, as it did not know from which direction the mawgun would come. Rumour swelled in the spreading, and to the mawgun's human features and bodies, horrible malformations were added. Aboriginal imagination revelled in the hideous monstrosities it conjured up out of the rumours.

Time after time, mawgun became a new and old and new tradition with fresh horrors added to the old ones. Flinders had time to become a tradition when Eyre and his comrade Baxter passed across their view, bringing ngadharri of their own colour with them. (No wonder the ngadharri were killed and eaten afterwards.) By and by the rumours became more than traditional and were relations of fact. Sturt and his nandhu (horses - the first Central Australian name applied to horses) were seen of many, and probably Leichhardt and his nandhu, and then came a new name for the mawgun - "wail-bela" (a corruption of whitefellow) and we come down to Giles' journey through the Badu at Boundary Dam, the Wong-gai-i, the Ngallee and other Koogurda groups, and still later came a fresh horror, and monsters that were shouted at as "Windinjiri! mawgun ngalguri!" (Camels! run! the monster's spirits are going to eat you,) made their appearance, and groups scattered to the four winds, dropping infants and food in their desperate fright. In time the origin of that dreadful creature was solved: its mother was most certainly the Kallaia (emu) and its father the nandhu (horse)!

There was still fear of the wailbela, but he had been "touched", tasted and handled by some one and the fear died down. Anger took its place for a time, for wailbela were killing their dhoogoerr keoga and taking only the gooloo (skin) thus offending dhoogoerr maalu (kangaroo) and kallaia. Wailbela were taking their dhoogoerr gabbi, and when they had drunk of it they let the windinjiri (camels) spoil it, and would not let its owners come near it; then, little by little, or quickly, according to local circumstances, the wailbela

assumed another, and although they did not know it, a still more dreadful aspect, and became a source of "idle wealth" to the natives who found a familiar labour for their women in administering to all that was bad in the wailbela who was no longer above their own native level.

Then the wailbela came to stay, and first the Yulbari nunga became less and less, others followed suit; the Walba wongga, the Wanmaring, Badu, Wong-gai-i, Ngallea; for with the first survey of the East-West Line which cut through the Koogurda groups and their allies, the extermination began - not from any deliberate cruelty of the white man, but from the impossibility of amalgamating two such extreme types - primitive man and civilised man, and the ready and eager adoption of the white man's vices only. They were always familiar with traffic in women, and that the wailbela knew the trade also simplified matters. Diseases from which we have become immune through the centuries - measles, chickenpox, whooping cough, came upon them suddenly and killed them off "like dogs", and so their destruction went on.

As the construction of the East-West Line proceeded, tribes from far and near heard of the abundance of food and the new "fire drink" ("Kala gabbi") that made them koora bamba (eyes blinded, drunk), and if, here and there, the prices of food and drink was a wiana or wanyi (woman or girl), why, these had always been saleable. Each group through whose territory the line was passing saw its waters absorbed, its game driven away, its food and water trees cut down, the whole country turned to strange uses, and its own people intruders on their own ground; but in their eagerness to "make the most of what they yet may spend" they did not realise the tragic significance of the event. The Koogurda allies closed in their ranks as their numbers lessened; they drank their Karrbiji gabbi only by courtesy of the white man, and from their appointed places and the spots where they had erected their kaanga (homes) for thousands of generations

became closed to them. Having stood aside to let the white man pass, they found they had to stand aside for all time.

When the first half-caste baby was born, they believed that the white man's food was the cause, for they were ignorant of the facts of birth, and they rubbed it frantically with charcoal to bring it to the "clean black colour" again, often killing the poor infant in the process. When they had eaten of the white man's "tree of knowledge", so to speak, they were not altogether pleased, for they had seen piebald horses and dogs of mixed colour, and though they could not coin the term "mongrel" the idea was there and they felt the degradation, until some one of them with Shavian humour, drew attention to Paddy's nose, or Micky's red hair in the baby, and Paddy and Micky had in consequence many calls on their wages. I know that the sight of the baby led many a white man to repentance!

The outlying tribes who came amongst them to share in the good things, brought strange magic with them, as well as strange women, and unprofiting by the protection of the white man, the remnants of the old tribes begged, borrowed and stole the women. Caste and law, by which their old life was regulated, consanguinous relationships which forbade marriage, were broken down in a moment, and as the women and girls succumbed, fresh contingents were sought for as far north as Musgrave and Everard Ranges, for it is only from the north and northwest that the new supplies can now come. All joined together in a sort of "armed neutrality" and began roving from Kalgoorlie, Laver-ton and Leonora (W.A.) to Tarcoola, Port Augusta, Eucla, and Fowler's Bay (S.A.), their old life with its songs and ceremonies travestied by the mongrel mobs that eke out their years under the shadow of the white man. They still drink Karrbiji gabbi, but they have to take it from the hot pipes stretching out from Coldil-nga to the Railway Siding at Coldea. Anyone who can claim the remotest connection with Karrbiji gabbi, with Ngallee, Jiwin, Wirongu or Badu, still feels pride in his

dhoogoorr water, and claims it as his, but there are very few to whom the ground is familiar and the old haunts of ngannamurra, burna, ginniga and kallaia are unknown to the younger members of the mob who play at hunting nowadays.