

Akurra Dreaming Stories

Contents:

1. Akurra at Yaki
2. Akurra at Karldinha
3. Akurra at Widapa Awi

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*Reference: All three stories are direct exact quotes from:
Tunbridge D, Flinders Ranges Dreaming, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, pg. 6-10*

Adnyamathanha Dreaming Stories and Country

Reference: Tunbridge D, Flinders Ranges Dreaming, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, pg. xxxvii-xxxix

Akurra at Yaki

A long time ago there was a big snake called Akurra who lived up in the ranges. He was thirsty, so he went down to Lake Frome for a drink. He drank a lot of salt water at the lake. In fact, he drank the lake dry.

Akurra drank so much salt water that his belly became bloated and he became heavy. As he lumbered up towards his home in the ranges, his big belly carved out a great gorge. He also made lots of waterholes where he camped in the gorge as he climbed back up into the hills. The first of these waterholes was Akurrula Awi.

He kept on coming up, gouging out the gorge, until he came to Nuldanuldanha. He camped here and made another big waterhole. From here he went on to Valivalinha and made another waterhole. After that the next important waterhole that he made was Adlyu Vundhu Awi.

From here he went up into Mainwater Pound. He kept on climbing up the creek until he arrived at Yaki Awi, and there he stopped. This is where he came to stay for the rest of his life, and he is still there today.

He often comes up out of the waterhole at Yaki and makes rumbling noises. He lies there sunbaking and while the sun makes him warm, he makes loud rumbling noises in his belly. You can hear that big rumbling noise from a long way away.

Land/Cultural Links

Akurra, the giant serpent of the Flinders Ranges, is the creator and keeper of the large, permanent waterholes. This story recounts the creation of the creek system between Mainwater Pound and Lake Frome, with its waterholes and magnificent gorges, incorporating Bolla Bollana and Arkaroola Creeks. It accounts for the fact that Lake Frome, created by the kangaroo and salted by the euro, is dry (The Euro and the Kangaroo Dreaming story). It also accounts for the rumbling sounds heard in the Gammon Ranges area (coinciding with movement on the fault line). In another form of this story, Akurra sets out for Yaki from Vurakurranha, a waterhole on the edge of Lake Frome where the John Creek comes in. The name of the serpent's first stopping place on his way home is Akurrula which means 'Akurra stretched out' (yula).

Glossary

Akurrula Awi - Arkaroola Springs
Nuldanuldanha - Nookkanooklana Waterhole
Valivalinha - Bolla Bollana Springs
Adlyu Vundhu Awi - Mainwater Springs
Yaki Awi - Yackie Waterhole

Akurra at Karldinha

Akurra set out from Yaki to go down to Lake Frome. He followed the main creek down. On the way he stopped to camp at Valivalinkha. He went on from here to Nuldanuldanha Awi Urtu where he camped.

There were some Yuras following Akurra all the way down from Yaki because they wanted to kill him. When Akurra was a Nuldanuldanha, they were camped at Valivalinha. They came over to Nuldanuldanha to try to get him.

Adnya nuldaanggadna. They rolled stones over. They rolled stones over the bank of the creek at him. That's why there are big rocks standing up in the creek at Nuldanuldanha. These rocks killed Akurra.

After this, Akurra revived and went on down the creek. Next he came to Ngawarlanha. It was here that the Yuras made a big noise at him. There is a big cliff there, and an echo comes off it.

He went on down to Akurrula Vari, until he came to Karldinha, near the lake. This is an Akurra Arngu ('Akurra's camp'). It was here that he died.

Land/Cultural Links

The story was told about the 'youngest Akurra'. (The 'old Akurra' is the one in *Akurra at Yaki*.) It assumes that the creation of the waterholes has already occurred. Valivalinha (or Palipalinha in its earlier form) is the origin of the English name Bolla Bollana for this waterhole. Nuldanuldanha (Awi Urtu) is Nooldoonooldoona ('waterhole'), the name deriving from the verb nulda ('to push over'). Ngawarlanha ('echo') is downstream a little way from Echo Camp. Karldinha is known as Caldina Well.

Glossary

Karldinha - Caldina Well
Akurra - serpent
Yaki - Yackie Waterhole
Valivalinha - Bolla Bollana Springs
Nuldanuldanha Awi Urtu - Nooldoonooldoona waterhole
Yuras - Adnyamathanha Aboriginal people
Ngawarlanha - Echo Camp
Akurrula Vari - Arkaroola Creek
Akurra Arngu - Akurra's camp

Akurra at Widapa Awi

Once upon a time there were only Aboriginal people in this country. They were dying from hunger. They were going through a big famine because there was a drought all over the country. That's why they went to Widapa Awi. They went down there so the Urngi could get Akurra out, to do something about the drought they were having.

When they arrived at Widapa Awi the first thing they did was build wurleys to stay in. Then they got Akurra out from the Akurra Awi there. They took out Akurra's kidney fat and heated it to make rain by holding it over the fire and letting the drops of melted fat fall onto the coals. After that a big gale force wind blew up. Akurra lay on the creek bank feeling sick because they had taken out his fat. As the smoke and the smell from the burning fat went up into the sky, it made a lot of big rain clouds come up. They burst, and down came showers of rain. A really big rain fell; it set in all around.

It was really great after that big rain. There was a lot of flooding in the creeks and that made plant foods spring up all over the place. There was munyeroo and windmill grass, native cabbage and tah-vine – all kinds of plant food.

Land/Cultural Links

This story is perceived as a record of history right up to the present time. It describes a particular occasion when the doctor men (urngi) endowed with special rain making powers actually performed the rain making ritual. Only they could approach the dangerous Akurra. They went into Akurra's cave (vandala) and brought him out. The operation which followed was accompanied by a special song sung by Wilyaru assistants. When the smell and the smoke from the burning kidney fat went up into the sky, a big general rain would set in.

The account underlines the constant struggle experienced in the Northern Flinders Ranges in the face of all too frequent droughts. This story describes for us one of several means traditionally employed to break a drought and ends with a striking description of the transformation which takes place after a good rain falls. The plant foods are said to 'spring up' (vudlandyadna, meaning 'they woke up') everywhere. In fact, the seeds of some plants may have lay dormant in the dry ground for years.

The plants named are:

- Munyeroo (*Portulaca oleracea vidlavaka*): the seeds are eaten ground, stems chewed and leaves cooked.
- Tah-vine (*Boerhavia diffusa aruwirri*) – the root is cooked.
- Windmill grass (*Panicum decompositum alhi*) – the raw seeds are eaten ground.
- Cabbage, narrow thread-petal (*Stenopetalum lineare wadkandhu*) – steamed in a ground oven.

Glossary

Widapa Awi – Widapa Creek

Urngi – doctor men

Akurra - serpent

Munyeroo – pigweed