

# The Wareengarry and Karambal

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On the Clarence River there once lived seven young women who were sisters, named Wareengarry; they were members of the Bunjellung tribe, and belonged to the Wirrakan division.<sup>1</sup> They were very clever, and had yamsticks, in the ends of which were inserted charms, which protected the girls from their enemies. Every day they went out hunting for carpet snakes, and always carried their yamsticks with them on these occasions. A young fellow named Karambal, of the same tribe, and of the division Womboong,<sup>2</sup> became enamoured of one of these young women, and followed within sight of them every day, but they did not favour his suit. He watched for an opportunity, and at length came suddenly upon one of the sisters who had strayed a little way from the rest, and had not her yamstick with her, and carried her off, taking her to his own camp. Her companions became very angry, and held a consultation as to what was best to be done to release their sister from Karambal, who was of the wrong division for her to marry, being in fact her tribal brother.

The eldest sister proposed sending a fierce storm of wind to blow up the trees by the roots, and tumble them upon Karambal and kill him. The other girls were afraid that their sister might also lose her life by the falling trees, and one of them made another proposal, that they should all go away to the west, where they knew the Winter lived, and bring the frost and chilly winds, and in this manner punish Karambal for what he had done. Accordingly, they went away and brought the Winter, and on the place where Karambal was camped with their sister they made the cold so exceptionally severe that he was almost perished with the frost. The girl whom he had captured did not feel this terrible cold, because her sisters had managed to send her, by a secret messenger, the charmed yamstick she formerly carried when out hunting with them. In a short time Karambal was glad enough to let Wareengarry return to her own people, who were very much rejoiced to get her back again amongst them. They then consulted amongst themselves, and determined to go away towards the east, in quest of the summer, so as to melt the frost and ice. They did not wish to impose any further hardship upon their tribe than was necessary, their only object being to rescue their sister from her captor.

After this trouble the Wareengarry resolved to leave the earth altogether, but before doing so they went into the mountains, and made springs at the heads of all the rivers, so that their people might always have plenty of water

throughout their hunting grounds. The seven sisters then went up into the sky, where the constellation known as the Pleiades still represents their camp. They come into view every Summer, bringing pleasant warm weather for the benefit of their tribe, after which they go away gradually towards the west, where they disappear. They then send the Winter to warn their kinsmen not to carry off a woman of the wrong totemic division, but to select their wives in accordance with the tribal laws.

Soon after the departure of the Wareengary from the earth the young man, Karambal, looked about for another sweetheart, and this time he was determined to comply with the marriage rules of his people. After a while he was smitten by the charms of a young woman who belonged to the Kooran<sup>3</sup> division, being that from which he could lawfully select a wife. She was, unfortunately, already united to another man, named Bullabogabun, a great warrior. Karambal succeeded in inducing her to leave her husband, and go away with him. When Bullabogabun discovered that his wife had eloped, he followed her tracks to the camp of Karambal. The latter, in order to escape the wrath of Bullabogabun, climbed up into a very large and tall pine tree growing near his camp, but his pursuer observed him hidden among the topmost branches. Bullabogabun then gathered all the wood he could find for some distance around, and piled it into an immense heap against the butt of the tree, and set fire to it. The fire raged with great fury, burning the pine tree into cinders. The flame reached high into the air, carrying Karambal with it, and deposited him in a part of the sky near the Wareengary, where he became the star Aldebaran (Alpha Tauri), in order that he might follow the sisters continually, the same as he had done in his youth.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See RHM 1897, 'The Totemic Divisions of Australian Tribes', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, vol. 31, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.