

THE CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS OF
THE ABORIGINAL NATIVES
OF NORTH WESTERN AUSTRALIA



JOHN G. WITHNELL & ROEBOURNE

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BY
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PREFACE

THE object of this work is to preserve, before civilization has made them obsolete, the traditions and customs of the aboriginal natives of the North-West of Western Australia--particularly those of the Pilbarra district--as accurately as possible, based upon upwards of twenty years' observation. Since the discovery of gold and the consequent influx of population the natives cannot carry out their traditions as they used to do--most of the young men being in the employment of the whites, prefer to imitate them, caring little or nothing for their elders' teachings. So it is merely a matter of time when they will become extinct. It is quite probable that the curse of drink together with the supplanting of black children by mixed races will eventually cause them to die out, for it is reasonable to suppose that few intellectual persons will find companionship in the natives, so they merely gain the evil part of the European element from those who do associate closely with them.



THEIR BELIEF

IT is a strange revelation to find that the natives believe in a common Creator, and that their race sprang from one man and woman. There is no mistake that this is their belief. Their Creator's name is GNURKER. They allow that he has a wife, who gave birth to the first couple sent to populate the earth. When their God saw that this earth was fit for man, and that all animal life and fishes were plentiful, He caused an immense whirlwind, which reached from Heaven to earth, and sent down his son and daughter with full instructions in all manner of ceremonies. They were to name their children by four tribal names--Banaka, Boorung, Paljarri, Kymera--and thus observe the marriage laws. They were to strictly follow out His commands, and when they died, their and their children's spirits would be received into heaven. They were given control over the fishes of the waters, the birds of the air, all animals, insects, and every living thing--that by a ceremony of will they could cause them to multiply and increase, they and their children for ever; and they were to set apart a hallowed spot called Tarlow for this purpose. Their God gave the men spears, throwing stick, and shields for protection and purposes of hunting; to the women he gave wooden scoops and paper bark from the Cajeput tree for the gathering of seeds and other uses. They were given power even over rain, and provision was made that every food they possessed should be held for the common good. As a covenant of God's promises they were to circumcise their young men at the age of fourteen years, and if they failed to carry out these laws He would be angry with them, and cause their children to fight against each other; whilst for breaking the marriage laws they should be killed by their own kindred. But their God would never forsake them, and would receive their spirit. It thus appears from their showing that they are the direct children of the Creator, who is all merciful to them, and that for any evil doing they are punished on earth alone. It must not be thought that their worship in any way resembles ours. On the contrary, all their modes are wild and barbaric, and so far as I can gather they do not worship Him in the same sense as we do. They have only to carry out the commands given by God to His children, and since they do not hold that their first parents sinned against Him in any way, they do not pray for forgiveness; for their wrong doings they are punished by their elders alone, and if they choose to overlook them they are forgiven. They know nothing of any Fall such as the eating of the forbidden fruit. At the same time although they do not at present have any direct form of worshipping Him, it is quite possible in ages past they had, and have

fallen away in this respect; the tarlow ceremony (dealt with elsewhere), the marriage laws, the circumcision, and others seem to indicate that they had. They do not worship the moon, stars, sun, or any images. So since they still, through tradition handed down from generations, hold that they are the Creator's own children and will return to Him in spirit, they must hold Him in respect though they do not fear Him. Although at times they are cruel to each other, yet they are in general equally as kind as are we. The name of an angel is Mulgarra--dwelling both on earth and heaven. They define heaven as space. They have strong belief in the spirit world both for good and evil. When the spirit has departed from the body it is called "Coodoo," and the body is called "Coudo." Although strange, some of their magicians maintain that they are able to leave their bodies in a trance, and in spirit visit other lands and converse with long-departed spirits.



TARLOW

A TARLOW is a stone or a pile of stones set apart as a hallowed spot, dedicated to the ceremony of willing that certain things such as children, birds, animals, insects, frogs, reptiles, fishes, and grass seeds, etc., be made to multiply and increase, each living thing having a separate tarlow, all of which belong to the head of each family, as master of the craft, descending from father to son. To make it clear, however, say that a family of the Banaka tribe had the tarlow of the eagle hawk, and wished them to multiply. They must journey to that shrine; for it cannot be done elsewhere. The head of the family may be accompanied by any number of Banaka, men he pleases to take part in the ceremony, but the spell would be broken if any members of the other three tribes came to the spot. When the elder Banaka dies, this tarlow would then descend to his sons, the eldest in particular, who would, of course, be of the Paljarri tribe, which would then have control in the Banakas' stead. Each of the Boorong, Paljarri, and Kymera tribes have other tarlows dedicated to their care, and do not intrude upon each other when such a mission is in hand. They have not the power to will a decrease in these things, and can only cause an increase. When a disease breaks out upon the young children they place them in a special spot set apart for the purpose in the hope that it may atone for and avert the evil. This place is kept covered with cajeput bark. They all have a different ceremony in willing each thing required; in some they hammer the cairn or boulder with other round stones and go through many speeches but being an outsider I unfortunately could not induce them to go through the ceremony whilst I was present. They carry with them when on this mission whatever weapons or utensils are used in gathering or procuring the thing to be willed. For instance, if they are willing grass seeds they take wooden scoops; if kangaroos, spears; if turkeys, nets, etc. They all dress differently, and make free use of feathers, charcoal, and white and red clays. The women also take part and inherit these tarlows.



INFANCY

IN order to follow the life of the natives it is advisable to commence from their birth. It is wonderful how hardy the native women as a rule are. During the hottest part of the day they can be found pounding at grass seeds out in the open without covering of any kind, and as cooking is required in the preparation of the seeds they have the heat of the fire in addition to that of the blazing sun. Thus they labour in all conditions of life, and usually right up to the time of their confinement. Immediately preceding confinement they are accompanied while gathering grass seeds by an elderly woman. They seldom rest before, and walk a mile or two after the infant is born, back to their camp, and rarely ever suffer any ill-effects. The child when newly-born is of a light copper colour, but after a few hours it is covered with grease and charcoal to keep the skin soft and prevent suffering from exposure. It is usually covered with and carried in cajeput bark. There is a small cry amongst the rest of the women in camp, and their nearest neighbours always pay the mother a visit as soon as the tidings reach them, bringing gifts of seeds or whatever they may have. It must be borne in mind that the natives generally live in families at various intervals of a few miles down the course of each river and its creeks; while some journey down others go up to the next waters; in fact they are small families constantly moving camp a few miles in any direction they please. The same freedom is a characteristic feature of the natives throughout. The parents are very fond of their children, and indulge their every fancy. They never chastise them, and the child often strikes its mother. I have seen children fully four years old still nourished by nursing. They have no toys, but their parents bring them small birds, etc., to play with, which they torture greatly to their parents' delight. The girls when about five years of age are promised to some man as wife by their parents, and it is quite surprising how quickly they grow up, budding into womanhood at about twelve. The children are all very happy, and learn to swim when very young. Their life in general is made up of one long holiday, with little to mark the days excepting stories brought in by the young men from the hunting fields. When the elders meet, the children are gathered round to pay attention to ancient stories and traditions, and thus they are preserved through ages. Up to about the age of fourteen the boys are allowed to eat anything, but they are now recognised as young men and have to go through the initiation of manhood, which they call "buckley," known to us as

CIRCUMCISION.

Prior to this season the women store a large quantity of grass seeds, etc., so as to have a supply in readiness for the feast, which is a feature of this ceremony. The families then meet at some given spot, the time being arranged by the stages of the moon, as "new" or "full," until the company present is of vast numbers. They then gather round and of one accord the youths are seized by the elders, a cord of spun hair being fastened around the arm, while the "coolardie" is swung vigorously in the camp by other men. The coolardie is a flat, carved, wooden shield--an ancient relic--having a hole in the one end through which is fastened a cord of spun hair. The end of the hair is held in the hand, and so the shield is swung round, making a noise like the roar of a bull. The elders then teach the novices fully and clearly all the ancient traditions, and what is expected of them on this occasion. The latter are then given about three days in camp to learn the chants and dances in connection with this important initiation. These consist of a chant and dance by the aged women only, called "Tunbagey," and another by the men only, known as "Una." They are intended for hunting, and are used when very much in need of food. The natives believe that these chants and dances were given them by their God through His son. The novices are then taught the chants or hymns called "Nambey" and "Wallawollangoe," which are sung on circumcision day. During this time they cannot converse with young women or children, using the coolardie to warn them out of the way, and are escorted everywhere by two men as guardians. After these few days in camp their guardians go out on a mission of collecting all those who have not come in, and bring everyone they possibly can in to the ceremony and feast, which they call "Nurka." When they have all come in, which should be within the month, they prepare a couch of boughs near a flat stone at some spot dedicated to the purpose of circumcision. Probably they may have as many as eight or ten youths to initiate, who, with the men only, proceed to the spot, the men being dressed in full war paint and chanting the "Nambey" and "Wallawollangoe"; the youths swinging their coolardies, and having feathers on their arms, a band of spun hair around their brow and waist (the latter ornamented with leaves). and the body coloured red. The women cry afar off. The operation is done with a piece of yellow flint kept for the purpose by each family, and known as "Candemerrah." Of course the parents do not operate on their own children. This is done by their uncles or tribal relatives. The mode of procedure is that the youths are held down by four or five men and the

operators perform their work. The skin is tied into the youth's hair. They then all journey back to camp and a great feast is partaken of by them and aged women alone. The younger women and children are not allowed to be present, but have their feast some distance away. The young "buckleys" as they are called, may now leave camp, but on approaching it they swing their coolardie to warn young women and children out of the way, as it is their belief that if they are looked upon by them they will suffer greatly. The closing part of this performance is: After about a month, or when the "buckley" has recovered, they, in company with their elders, journey into some back creek, where, after further rites, the elders remove the skin that had been previously fastened in the "buckley's" hair and now dried, and after raising the bark of a young tree they force the skin between the wood and bark, the bark closing back over it. They then express the hope that the youth may flourish like the green tree, and the coolardies and flints are returned to their proper places among the rocks until again required.

PROHIBITED FOOD.

From this stage in his life the youth is not allowed to eat emu or turkey until he has been speared or the elders, considering him a man, invite him to eat with them. Young damsels are also prohibited from eating emu and turkey until they attain the age of twenty-one or become mothers.



A NUDE PEOPLE

THE natives in their wild state have no covering for their bodies and are perfectly nude, possessing no shame. As ornament they fasten rats' tails, or twist and spin up their relatives' hair, with which they dress their own, binding it together at the back of the head to prevent it from falling over their eyes, as they wear their hair long and greasy, rubbing emu fat, etc., on it. This hair dress is not at all picturesque. For, owing to continual grease and dirt it forms into knots, each often matted into five pounds weight, as they have no substitute for a comb. They also dress their beard in a similar manner. They spin hair into belts, in which they hang small game, coyleys, etc., when hunting. They are particularly fond of greasing their bodies and rubbing on decayed ironstone (ochre), white chalk, and char. coal. They also use these in painting their shields, and as colouring for all purposes.



MARRIAGE LAWS

AS we have seen before, the marriage laws are very strict, and are by tribe as follows:-

1. BANAKA marries BOORONG.
Their children are PALJARRI.
2. PALJARRI marries KYMERA.
Their children are BANAKA.
3. BOORONG marries BANAKA.
Their children are KYMERA.
4. KYMERA marries PALJARRI.
Their children are BOORONG.

It will thus be seen that brothers' children can not inter-marry, neither can sisters' children. The only consanguinous marriages allowed are brothers' and sisters' children, who may be relative cousins or only tribal cousins, in which case they are entitled to each other under the rights of "Nuba"--meaning tribal wife or tribal husband. And so a man could not marry any other relative than an aunt's daughter or a tribal cousin. He could not marry a tribal granddaughter though she were of the right tribe and age; for a tribal granddaughter is a tribal daughter's daughter, and not a tribal aunt's daughter. When the young people are betrothed the nephew or future son-in-law must not converse or associate with his aunt or future mother-in-law, who is called "Tuer"; and when necessity compels them to speak to each other, they stand with their backs turned, and the interview is as short as possible. After the marriage this rule is not quite so strict. Should death occur to the man, the next in right takes his wife. This fortunate person is very often the deceased's brother, who may already have two or more wives and does not care to take upon himself another responsibility; for surely it is so, seeing he has to avenge their affronts and defend them; in which case he has the right to pass her on to one of his younger brothers or any tribal "Nuba." Should she not care to accept the choice he has made for her, a term is arranged in which the "Nuba" may try to win her, and it usually transpires that she accepts him. In some cases another man of the right tribe runs away with her, and this nearly always brings about a quarrel in which many kinsmen of both

sides are wounded. Sometimes the elders allow this man to keep her after spearing him, and at others they take her away. Should the lover not be of the right tribe, they always kill him, and the woman is taken by right as captive so long as the captor is of the marriageable tribe. The captor is usually the "Nuba" who has been chosen previously by her people. The captive woman is generally chastised. The women generally find it better to have no heart in marriage, and thus save much fighting and suffering. Every woman is always subject to ill-treatment by her man when he is of a cruel disposition. They always have to gather and prepare the grass-seeds for their families' uses. There is no marriage ceremony. When the man considers it is time that he should take the damsel promised to him, he makes a demand to her father or uncle, and they order the girl to go to his camp, called "Yoollo," which is pitched some short distance away, and formed by a few boughs laid on the ground in a half circle. It is merely a break-wind, and is moved in the direction of the wind each night. The natives have no permanent place of habitation, and only stay a few days at each water hole. They, however, do not go far off the rivers, and by means of this frequent moving about they get game more readily. They have no shelter from the storms, except that found among the hills or caves. It must not be thought that the women possess any chastity or virtue towards their husbands, beyond waiting upon him, attending to all his wants, and living with him. It is true the men quarrel over the women, but the motive is jealousy and not honour--for there is no stain on the woman's character thereby--though her man ill-treats her to maintain his brute force. A man may marry two or more sisters.

The following are the native names for relatives:-

RELATIVES.

"Mumerdie"--Father
 "Nungerdie"--Mother
 "Marinna"--Son
 "Thalbyina"--Daughter
 "Cooder"--Brother
 "Thoodo"--Sister
 "Cucker"--Uncle
 "Tuer" or "Yaro"--Aunt
 "Mialie"--Grandfather

"Cundarie"--Grandmother
"Tamey"--Grandfather-in-law
"Cobbalie"--Grandmother-in-law
"Nuba"--Husband or wife
"Murkeno"--Brother-in-law
"Chillia"--Children
"Buckley"--Young man
"Buckelo"-Maiden
"Coorie"--Woman without children
"Niader"--Male
"Mungguella"--Female
"Boothong"--Woman that has had children



THE PROCURING OF FOOD

THE men do the hunting for such as turkey, or emu, kangaroo, &c. In the case of birds or wildfowl, they are experts in snaring. This is done by placing a light frame of sticks over the birds' nests, or if snaring small game. over a water-hole. A net made for this purpose from the reeds that grow by the water's edge, with meshes varying in size up to three inches square according to the nature of the game, is fastened over the frame, leaving an opening for the bird to enter. The native hides some few yards away, and as soon as the bird enters, the native rushes up to the opening and secures it.

Another very successful method practised by the Shaw River natives is to find a small water-hole some distance from other water, which is easily done in our stretches of dry river bed, and place two semi-circles of boughs around the water, thus leaving an open space at each end for the kangaroo to enter and pass on to the water. After a few nights, the animals get accustomed to this, and make quite a pad through. The natives will then place two upright poles at one entrance with a cross bar above the height of a kangaroo's head, Upon this bar is fastened a bag net, about 8 ft. by 4 ft., which is tied down by reeds. ready for snaring. The kangaroo comes in by the other entrance, and when he has passed by, the natives (there are generally two of them) spring from their hiding place. The kangaroo makes up the pad to the other end he knew so well, only to be bagged in the net. The natives then kill him with their clubs. They catch three or more in this way in a night.

The natives have enormous appetites. Many of the stronger men boast they can eat a kangaroo--usually weighing about 30 lbs.--in three meals, and from personal observation I quite believe it. Their method of curing flesh when the supply is greater than the appetite is to cook the flesh, and, after it becomes cold, part it into thin steaks or cutlets, and place them in the sun to dry, turning them regularly. The meat cures very well, although very hard and dry in appearance. To prepare this, they have to place it in the fire for a few minutes and then pound it between two stones, when it readily becomes as mince-meat. Strange to say, they never use salt or seasoning of any kind.

Another method these natives have of catching large game, is by digging a round hole about 4 ft. deep by 6 ft. in circumference on the

pads to water. They place a few light twigs across this, cover it with a thin sheet of paper-bark and sprinkle loam or sand on the surface. As soon as pressure is placed on this spot the twigs break, and the game falls into the pit which is purposely made narrow as to prevent the animal getting out.

The manner in which they kill hawks shows how they can exercise patience. They procure a small rat and tie it to a small rod about 2 ft. long. They then light fires, which attract the hawks, and hide themselves in it large bunch of spinifex or "torrida grass" The rod is gently moved in the open with the left hand; in the right they hold a club called "Wakaboora." The hawk swoops down for the rat, and receives the club instead. I have seen them get fully a dozen in this manner in a few hours.

They make their nets for fishing from very coarse spinifex. They collect all the sharp heads and tie them in small bundles of about 15 inches in circumference, which are then dried in the sun. These are soaked in water and beaten between two smooth stones when they readily thread into flax. They then twist them into twine, which is very strong and lasts a long time. The meshes of the net are formed with the fingers. For a needle they use a light stick split down about two inches at each end, and steamed so as to set the points out to hold the twine at a gauge which will pass comfortably through the size mesh adopted in the net. The knot is exactly similar to the one used by our fishermen.

It must not be thought that their food is limited, for it is quite the contrary. They have a variety of roots, berries, and vegetable leaves. Their method of cooking some of these I thought rather novel. They tear off a piece of bark from the cajeput tree and place therein the leaves, which are then sprinkled freely with water. In a fire close by are stones heated to red-heat. These stones are placed amongst the leaves, and the latter are turned with a stick. When the stones have lost some of their fierce heat and have produced a large amount of steam, the bark is closely folded round to keep the steam in, and after about twenty minutes the leaves are cooked. In cleaning grass seeds the women are experts at sifting the foreign matter, such as the husks and sand, from the grain. They use a large wooden scoop called a "Thardo," and by a peculiar motion of the wrist and fingers the substances readily divide a stream of pure grass seeds coming out at one end and the refuse at the other. I have given them equal parts of sugar and sand to divide as a test, and the result was the same--the

sugar was quite clear of sand, whilst the operation was accomplished in a very short time. If the natives were sufficiently resourceful they could store enough grass seeds to last them through a drought, but they make very little provision in this way. They do, however, gather small quantities in heaps, which they cover with bark, and they find even this a great stand-by. They can light a fire by means of two sticks. One of these, with a hole and grooved partly on one side, is laid on the ground. Then an upright piece is worked in the hole by downward pressure of the palms of the hands, and the friction produces fire. For the purpose of lighting tires they carry amongst their belongings the most suitable sticks they can obtain.

A weed which grows amongst the rocks the natives use as tobacco. After breaking it up fine they mix it with hot ashes and a few drops of water, rolling it up in a light covering of fibres that are obtained from the roots of some grasses. They chew the quid, swallowing the juice. After each man has taken a few draws--which is generally sufficient--it is passed on to the women. The natives of these parts--I am referring to civilized ones--are very dirty in their habits. They have a great love for new clothes, especially for those of brilliant colors. It is with the greatest difficulty they are made to keep themselves clean, even when they are sufficiently domesticated to become housemaids.

They have no cooking utensils such as pots and pans, all the cooking being done in the ashes or coals or by heated stones. It is most wonderful how these natives know each others tracks by some peculiarity they detect in the impression. It is impossible to deceive them, as they have only to see ones footprints a few times to know them, and they can pick out any natives' tracks from dozens of others. This they can do also with horses and other stock.

They have a name for every hill, river and its branches, and for everything. The cajeput tree they call "Talgue," the trunk they call "Cuddarah," the roots "Culka," the branches "Gualle," the twigs "Gnallera," the leaves "Barngher," the flower "Cullobin," the nut "Buller," the bark "Millie." They also have every portion, bone, and organ of the body named.



AMUSEMENTS

WHENEVER the natives congregate for an purpose they always have amusements of all kinds and a grand ball called a "Corroborie," which everyone attends. The men dress as follows: The body is greased, and then stripes of white down feathers, red ochre, white pipe clay, and charcoal are affixed to and painted on the body perpendicularly, but on the thighs the stripes are horizontal. The hair is dressed with white feathers and wood shavings. In each hand is carried a stick about two feet long with shavings along them at regular intervals. They wear a bunch of emu feathers on each arm and a larger bunch fastened as an appendage to the back of the belt. The master of ceremonies is also in full dress, but has his head-dress of shaved sticks, laced and interlaced with spun hair, to which are adhered down feathers. The songster has two flat smoothly-hewn thin half-circles of wood called "Coyleys." These are held one in each hand and beaten together like the rattling of bones in a christy minstrel performance, excellent time being kept. When the song starts the men are about twenty feet away. The M.C. rushes out to the front followed by the whole company in single file, who then dance into a square. At times they are four deep and at others eight, and they are clever in forming squares and changing into lines so readily. They have no partners. Each raises his foot at the same moment about two feet high and brings it down with great force. The soil is usually soft, and the thud caused by so many feet striking the earth at the same time can be heard some distance away. The women join in the dance on the outer edge, but they do not lift their feet as the men do, keeping time by gliding from right to left, their arms swinging to time also. The women do not dress for the occasion. At the close of the dance the men shake their bodies as though shivering with extreme cold, and whoever can thus rid himself of the most feathers is considered the best dancer.

For pastime they throw the coyleys, which owing to their peculiar shape return to the spot from whence they were thrown after taking two or more complete circles in the air. They also throw their spears for practice at something soft, such as a light sheet of bark at about 15 to 20 yards. Their game, however, is usually speared at a much shorter range. They pick sides and throw blunted miniature spears at each other. They can either dodge these spears or turn them off with a small stick held in the left hand, and they seem to enjoy this sport immensely. After sharpening these spears they throw along the

ground round pieces of gum bark with all the speed they can, and as the bark passes by, those on the opposite side have to spear it while in motion, but as they have no way of counting neither side wins or loses. They cannot count above three, their numeration being as follows: "Cungerie," one; "Coothera," two; "Bruggo," three. They also find amusement in a programme of songs in which all take part. For keeping time they use their throwing stick, which has a number of small notches on its side for this purpose. With a two-pronged stick they scrape three beats, as up, down, up, along the small notches. At other times they mark time by clapping their hands together.

ROCK CARVINGS.

They have very many rock carvings; every hill that has suitably hard stone will have some kind of figure tattooed thereon. They do not choose the softer rocks, and mainly prefer the basalt and granite. The method adopted is to draw the outline with chalk or ochre and with a sharp hard stone hammer within the outline until the rock is fretted away about one-eighth of an inch deep. Some of the figures are very large, whilst others are small. None of the outlines show much aptitude for drawing. The head is round, then a straight line much smaller than the head represents the trunk of the body. A slighter line on each side represents the arms, with a bend for the elbow, and a large ball at the end of each of these line, represents the hands. Each leg is the same size as the body, with enormous feet, the whole being greatly out of proportion. Some, however, are done a little better, but others so badly that they require explaining. The carvings are mainly representative of men, kangaroos, rats, opossums, emus, turkeys, fishes, spears, shields, native weapons of all kinds, and many men and women in a variety of vulgar attitudes.



BATTLE

THEIR mode of fighting is most cruel. They have long spears barbed in rows and, sometimes double rows for one foot from the point. In the case of a quarrel between two men, they stand about 20 paces apart, and each throws his spears at the other's thighs. For warding off these spears each warrior has a shield made of light wood, which is used with the utmost dexterity. After a few turns they close in, and each man offers first his left thigh to the other to be stabbed with the larger spear. This they continue in turns, and the one who falls first is the vanquished, but often the combat ends in a free fight in which many men are wounded. The relatives grow angry and resentful as the combat proceeds, and then clubs, firesticks, stones, etc., as well as spears are used. The victims are sometimes crippled for a few weeks and suffer greatly. Charcoal is rubbed over the wounds to keep the flies off. The fragments of the spears which have broken off in the flesh cause festers, but the rapidity with which the wounds heal is marvellous. In these "camp fights" it is the law to avoid spearing each other above the thigh, though of course in tribal battles this does not apply.

The natives are divided into many tribes, having their boundaries defined. They are in constant dread of being killed. and do not allow that any man dies from natural causes, holding that his death is occasioned by the evil spirit or witchcraft of some other tribe, which must be revenged. No doubt by this means they keep the fighting strength of the tribes fairly equal. The method of deciding which tribe has, worked this spell is as follows: All the warriors gather round at a cleared patch of ground, dressed in full war paint--that is, their bodies greased, then red ochre daubed all over with occasional strips of white down feathers in the hair, red being the predominant color. A lock of hair taken from the dead man's head is curled and twisted up tightly by one of the magicians, who after a lengthy address suddenly releases the hair, which owing to the twisting it has received spins round in all directions. The victim for revenge is considered to be located in the direction which the pointed end of the hair finally indicates. The warriors accordingly set out, and will travel for days, gathering strength as they go. The other tribes, upon hearing of this, all muster for protection; and should the two armies meet by mischance there is a battle. But this the avengers try to avoid, as their mission is to kill one man isolated from the rest and who is in all probability quite

unaware of their loss. Among the many tribes of the North-West district, a few are as follows:--

The GNALOUMA,	near Roebourne.
KYREARA,	on the Yule River.
NAMEL,	on the Shaw River.
YINGIEBANDIE,	on the Tableland.
PULGOE PEDONG	head of the DeGrey and Oakover and Fortescue Rivers.

The natives' physicians are supposed to be able to cure their illnesses and drive away the evil spirits of other tribes, providing they have not used any exceptional witchcraft. When his attendance is required the physician stands over the patient and groans aloud, and then makes a noise resembling the hushing of a child to sleep. Next, he stands with one foot upon the affected part, and then briskly rubs and squeezes it with his hands. When he considers this massage has been sufficient he puts his mouth over the affected part and proceeds to draw out the evil spirit, calling it a "Warloo." After all the evil spirits have been drawn out he runs some little distance with them in his hand and carefully buries them; then he returns, puts his hand to his side, draws out a good spirit, and inserts it into the patient. The physician makes a clicking noise presumably with his finger nails--which the natives of course believe is the spirit being drawn out. When they have rheumatism, neuralgia, or headache they bind the affected part with runners or creepers, but have very few decoctions of herbal remedies.

The natives tell me that the tribes used to wage war against each other, the victors taking away the women and children, and that there are many battlefields in the district. The weapons used were spears, coyleys, shields, and clubs. Many would be slain on the field, and the weaker side would have to flee for their lives. As they took no prisoners and gave no quarter, all the wounded enemy would be slain, and parts of them eaten, whilst their women would be taken captive. Those who ran away would gather forces again and set out to overtake the victors, have their revenge, and bring back their women. The retreating force would consequently have to leave the rivers and plains and work their way home through the hills and ranges, and in this way were not always overtaken. The natives have to keep their women fairly near them when marching to battle, as if they were left

behind a tribe from some unexpected quarter might kidnap them. They offer up some portion of their slain kinsmen--usually the arm--to fire, and go through a ceremony of sacrifice to will that plague and disease may overtake their enemy. They do not bury the dead, but leave them on the field. It must be borne in mind that, all the natives of the North are cannibals. and eat some portion of their victims. Sometimes when kinsmen meet they cut a vein in each other's arm, collecting and mixing the blood therefrom in a shell or other vessel, and pass it around, each taking a deep draught.



DEATH

WHEN a death occurs in the camp the men and women throw themselves on the ground, run a few paces, and prostrate themselves again, beating their heads with shells and stones,--the men using the ends of their throwing-sticks, in each of which is set a piece of flint for cutting purposes with spinifex wax called "Bulga." It is quite usual to see streams of blood pouring from their heads. They lie upon the body to signify they would like to restore life. The near relatives cut off and keep the deceased's hair, often dressing their own hair and beard with it. In memorial they gather round and cry every time that stage of the moon returns, as they mark the time by new and full moon. This is done every month until the season changes, as although they cannot count, they know the periods of summer and winter--not only by the heat and cold, but by the difference in the vegetation. They have no regular hour of burial. The body is placed in a grave about four feet deep, generally in a sitting posture facing the direction of its birthplace, and is covered over with paper bark. Then the grave is filled in with earth. If the deceased has been a good warrior they encircle the grave with boughs and decorated with a few relics. All men attending the burial are in war paint, and on some occasions the body is similarly dressed. If the deceased has been a good sportsman they often place his body among the rocks, and after a time his family circle gather and keep in their possession his small bones, which are supposed to impart to them his skill in hunting. The near relations, as a semblance of mourning, refrain from eating fish or kangaroo, unless the latter is a very small one. This they call being "Chadgie" until the season has passed, when one of the elders terminates the observance by rubbing them across the mouth with a piece of kangaroo flesh, when the fast is broken.

On some occasions all the elders are through unavoidable causes not present at the death and burial, and on their arrival a very interesting display of sympathy is witnessed. The visitor, who is fully armed but not in war paint, approaches within about thirty yards of the camp and awaits the coming of an elder, who is likewise armed. They assume attitudes of defiance, and parley over the cause of death until the visitor is in possession of all the circumstances. They then drop their weapons and rush into each other's arms, weep together in a loud voice, and finally the younger thrusts his hand under the thigh of the elder, whilst the relatives gather round and offer their legs to the

visitor to spear. He takes his spear and after a mock attack touches or pricks their legs with the point. Sometimes, however, if he finds anyone is directly responsible for the death, the visitor spears him severely. The women gather with their visitors, sitting in a close circle on the ground, crying loudly together, and striking each other gently on the neck. They sing no chants or songs in connection with a death or burial.

