



The Keeparra Ceremony of Initiation

Author(s): R. H. Mathews

Source: *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 26 (1897), pp. 320-340

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2842007>

Accessed: 14/06/2014 23:12

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Dr. GLADSTONE thanked the audience for the cordial manner in which they had received his communication. There had no doubt been criticisms, as well as the addition of several interesting facts; but he did not think that any statement of his had been impugned, except when Mr. Gowland denied that the small quantity of cuprous oxide would make copper hard. This had been stated on the authority of Dr. Percy. There was no doubt that the adze found at Tell-el-Hesy, which was very rich in red oxide, was very hard indeed. Mr. Myres' observations on the hammering of celts which had been cast in a mould would warrant the addition of hammering as another means by which the ancients sought to harden their copper tools.

He did not think that the fact of no transition period between the use of stone and that of bronze being found in Japan and some other countries was any argument against the theory he supported. Some nations must necessarily be first in the discovery of the value of copper, and in the art of hardening it by tin; and when bronze tools became common, and the science of navigation advanced, they would naturally be carried as merchandize to other nations that had not yet advanced beyond the use of stone implements. Thus it is not likely that specimens of an intermediate stage would be found there. It appeared to him that the theory which explained the largest number of facts was that the ancient nations about the eastern part of the Mediterranean, Egypt, Chaldæa, Syria, Cyprus, Greece, Sardinia, did pass through a transitional period of the use of copper implements before the invention of bronze.

With reference to Mr. Rudler's request for the details of analyses, Dr. Gladstone was quite willing to add the figures, so far as he can, in an appendix.

The KEEPARRA CEREMONY of INITIATION. By R. H. MATHEWS,
L.S., Corres. Memb. Anthropol. Inst. of Great Britain.

[WITH PLATE XXXII.]

THE tribes whose initiation ceremonies are treated of in this paper occupied a tract of country on the eastern coast of New South Wales, extending from about Newcastle almost to the Macleay River, comprising approximately the counties of Macquarie, Hawes, Gloucester, and the eastern half of the county of Durham. Several different dialects were spoken by the tribes who occupied the districts referred to, including the Watthungk, Molo, Birrapee, Bahree, Kutthack, Minyowa,

Carapath, Gorenggai, and some others. Although this is one of the first portions of the colony settled upon by the English people, nothing has hitherto been done to obtain a comprehensive account of the initiation ceremonies of the native tribes who were originally spread over it.

The disappearance of the aborigines before the white race has been so rapid that unless steps be taken without delay to collect authentic records of their customs, it will soon become impossible to obtain any reliable information respecting them. The object of the present paper is to furnish a detailed description of the ceremonies of initiation as they were formerly carried out, and are still practised by a few remnants of the tribes within the districts mentioned. The information contained in the following pages is entirely new, and is now published for the first time.

The Main Camp and Keeparra Ground.—The last *Keeparra* held on the Manning River took place in the winter of 1889, on a part of the Australian Agricultural Company's Grant of 464,640 acres, in the county of Gloucester, New South Wales. The site chosen for the general encampment was a short distance from the right bank of Stony Creek, a small stream which flows north-easterly into the Manning River. This *Keeparra* ground is about three-quarters of a mile up Stony Creek, from the crossing-place over that creek of the public road from Tinonee to George Town. This road passes through the north-eastern corner of the Grant above mentioned, and crosses the Manning River about 30 chains above the confluence therewith of Charity Creek, which flows in on the northern side of the river.

The *Kackaroo*, or public ring, was 130 yards S. 50° E. from the right bank of Stony Creek on some level, thickly wooded country. The tribes who attended the ceremony camped around this ring, each tribe occupying the side nearest their own districts. Water for camp use was obtained from the creek referred to, and there were good hunting grounds all around.

The *kackaroo* consisted of an oval space 28 feet in the longest diameter by 23 feet across, bounded by a raised earthen embankment or wall, which was formerly about a foot high—the base of the wall being about 18 inches through. In one side of this embankment an opening, 3 feet wide, was left, from which a narrow pathway, *yupparang*, led away through the forest in a direction bearing S. 40° W. for a distance of 370 yards to another and larger oval enclosure, called the *goonambang* (excrement place). This space was 31 feet by 26 feet, and was enclosed by an earthen wall similar to the one near the camp, and the path entered it through an opening left in its wall in

the same way. The longest diameter of both these ovals was in the direction of the pathway connecting them, and the embankment was continued a few feet outwards along each side of the pathway in both cases. In the middle of the second, or larger, enclosed space was a heap of earth about 4 feet in diameter at the base, and 18 inches high, on top of which a fire had been kept burning. Plate, XXXII, Figs. 1 and 2.

There were no figures of men, animals, or other devices, formed by heaping up the loose earth, or by cutting an outline in the surface of the soil, contiguous to the path connecting the ovals, similar to those seen on the Bora and Burbung grounds of the Kamilaroi and Wiradthuri tribes, whose initiation ceremonies are described by me elsewhere.¹

A number of trees were marked around the *goonambang*, some of them being just outside the embankment, and others nearly two chains distant from it. The devices upon them consisted of the curious marking called *dharrook* or *dharroong* by the natives, and were cut upon the bark only. The trees selected were grey gum and spotted gum, the bark of which are smooth and soft, and well suited for the purpose. The *dharroong* extended from near the butts of the trees to an altitude varying from 6 feet to 22 feet up the bole or trunk. Most of the trees were marked all round the trunk, but some were ornamented only on the side facing the *goonambang*.

On an iron bark tree, the only one of that species marked on this Keeparra ground, was the representation of an iguana (Fig. 9), 4 feet 2 inches long, and 9 inches across the widest part of the body—the legs being about 5 inches in length, and were without claws. The head is turned to the left, as if the animal were looking about. This drawing was outlined in the bark by means of a nick cut with a tomahawk.

There were twenty other marked trees, all grey and spotted gums, seven of the most representative of which are shown in Figs. 6, 7, 8, 10 to 13, of Plate XXXII. The carving of the pattern shown in Fig. 13, covered 21 feet 8 inches of the bole of the tree, commencing at 3 or 4 inches from the ground, making a total height from the surface of the ground of about 22 feet. The marking shown in Figs. 6 and 10 extended up the trunks of the trees about 15 feet. The *dharrook* on all these trees was cut into the bark with a tomahawk, but did not extend to the wood.

It will perhaps be interesting to describe another keeparra ground visited by me, which is situated between three and four

¹ "Journ. Anthrop. Inst.," xxiv, 411-427: *op. cit.*, xxv, 295-339; "American Anthropologist," ix, 33-49; "Journ. Roy. Soc. N.S. Wales," xxviii, 93-129; "Proc. Roy. Soc. Victoria," ix (N.S.), 137-173.

miles north-easterly from the village of Gresford, New South Wales. The main camp of the natives who were present at the ceremonies was pitched in an open forest, on some gently sloping ground a few chains easterly from the left bank of a small watercourse, a tributary of the Allyn River, within Portion No. 55, of 2,000 acres, in the parish of Lewinsbrook, county of Durham. The local Allyn River tribe were the first to erect their camp, around which the other tribes took up their positions, each in the direction of the country from which they had come.

Close to the eastern side of the general encampment was the *kackaroo*, 40 feet by 29 feet, from which the *yuppang* or path led away on a bearing of N. 85° E., ascending some sloping ground for a distance of 17 chains to the *goonambang*, on the crest of a low ridge. The diameters of this oval space were 28 feet and 20 feet respectively, being smaller than the oval near the camp. The usual heap of earth on which the fire is kept burning was in the centre of this enclosure. There were formerly several marked trees, around the *goonambang*, but they have all been burnt down and destroyed by bush fires. At a distance of about 7 chains in a north-north-westerly direction from the *goonambang*, along the top of the ridge, were a few other marked trees, the *dharroong* on some of which are still distinguishable. I copied these marks, but have not reproduced them in the present paper.

Mustering the Tribes.—When it is found that there are a sufficient number of boys old enough for initiation, the headman of the tribe whose turn it is to call the community together, who may be called the “Chief Initiator,” sends out messengers to all the neighbouring tribes whom it is desired shall be present. The headman does not take this step on his own responsibility, but after due consultation with the elders of his tribe. When one of these messengers¹ arrives at the camp of the tribe he has been directed to summon, he sits down in sight of the men’s quarters, and some of them go over to him, knowing by his manner that he is the bearer of news to their tribe. They would treat him hospitably, and talk with him about general matters of tribal interest. On the following morning he would accompany the men to the *weeng’garah’*, or meeting place where they assemble to discuss all such matters as they do not wish the women or uninitiated youths to take part in. On reaching the *weeng’garah*, which would be only a short distance from the camp, the messenger would tell the headman and elders the purport of his mission, and would

¹ The messenger generally has another man with him when engaged on this duty, to keep him company.

hand them a white quartz crystal which had been given to him by the chief initiator when dispatching him on this errand.

If these people, after deliberation among themselves, decide to accept the invitation, they give the messenger another white stone to be carried back to the headman who sent him. The latter, on receiving this token of their concurrence, then selects a suitable plan in some part of his own territory where game is sufficiently plentiful to afford food for his visitors, and there he commences to prepare the ground. If, on the contrary, the tribe to whom the white stone was sent consider the time inopportune, or that there are other weighty reasons for postponing the general gathering, no white stone is returned by the messenger, and the initiator then knows that they do not approve of his proposal, and the matter lapses for the present.

Assuming that the invitation has been accepted, the initiator immediately commences to prepare the keeparra ground, and dispatches another set of messengers, each of whom are on this occasion provided with a bull-roarer (*goonandhakeea*), several tails or kilts, a belt, and other articles. Each messenger on arriving at his destination would be received in the manner already described, and would hand the bull-roarer to the headman, who would take charge of it, and the tails would be distributed to the men to whom they had been sent. Nothing would be said to the women about these proceedings until the time arrived for making a start for the place of meeting. One of the men would then sound a bull-roarer just after dark in the vicinity of the camp, and next morning every one would pack up and proceed by easy stages towards the appointed tryst, dances and songs being indulged in at night at each of the stages along their route. At these camping places, one of the men swings the bull-roarer in the adjacent forest just after dark, and again a little before daylight, and the women reply to it by beating on their rugs, and singing; the men give a shout in unison.

When such a contingent gets within about a day's journey of the main camp, a messenger is sent on to report that they will arrive next day or the day following. When they get near the camp, the men, women and children sit down a short distance out of sight of the goonambang. The men then paint themselves with white stripes on their chests, on their arms, and on their legs from the knee down. When this painting is completed, two of the men go ahead by themselves, each of them carrying one or two boomerangs in his belt and one in his hand; in the other hand he carries a small bough ready for use by and bye.

The men belonging to the local tribe—and other mobs, if any, who have arrived previously—who may be called the “hosts,” repair from the main camp to the goonambang and sit down within it, having their faces turned in the direction of the camp. When these two men get close to the goonambang they gently hit the boomerangs which they carry in their hands against those in their belts, and the hosts answer, *huh!* Then they advance a few paces, and stamp one foot on the ground, and the hosts answer *heh!* This beating of boomerangs and stamping is repeated till the men get quite close to the back of the goonambang. The two men now separate, one going round one side, and one round the other, and again meet at the entrance of the goonambang, where they stand and dance, shaking their boughs and boomerangs for a brief period. They then throw down the boughs, and go away back to their comrades, who have remained at the place where they painted themselves, and all of them now approach the goonambang, lightly tapping their boomerangs together as they walk along, and on arriving at the ring they form a circle round it.

The hosts now get up and go outside, where they remain standing in a group, and one or more of their number commence sounding the *goonandhakeea* or bull-roarer. The women at the camp, on hearing this, assemble at the *kackaroo*, and begin to sing and beat their rugs, and some of them dance. The women belonging to the new mob also started from where they had been sitting down, as soon as their men started for the goonambang, and proceeded direct to the main camp, where they joined the women of the hosts.

As soon as the bull-roarers commenced to sound, the men of the new mob entered the goonambang, and walked round, and then started towards the *kackaroo* in a meandering line, in single file, carrying their boomerangs and other weapons with them. They were immediately followed by the hosts, each of whom carried green bushes in their hands. On arriving at the circle they walked once round it, and then entered it through the opening in its wall, the women at the same time going out of it by stepping over the embankment at the other end, where they remained as spectators. The men then dance and jump about in the ring, uttering guttural noises, the men of the new mob calling out the names of a few principal camping grounds in the country from which they have come. All the men and women then disperse into the camp, and the strangers commence erecting their quarters. These arrivals generally take place in the afternoon a few hours before sundown.

Daily Performances at the Main Camp.—Every day the men go out hunting, and meet each other in the evening an hour or

so before sundown at the goonambang. If some of the men have remained in the camp all day, they also will proceed to the goonambang and meet the others there. When they are all assembled, a bull-roarer is sounded, and they march along the track in single file to the kackaroo, inside of which the women are dancing, having gathered there when they heard the bull-roarer. The men then march once round the outside of the circle in the same manner as on the arrival of a tribe, already described. The women then step out of the ring, and stand a few yards from it, where they remain till the conclusion of the performance.

The men now enter the ring and dance round a few times, shouting out the names of remarkable places, after which all hands walk away to their respective camps.

A level patch of ground in a convenient part of the camp is cleared and made smooth for dancing on. Almost every evening one of the tribes present gets up a corroboree for the amusement of the others. The men of one tribe dance one evening—their women beating time for them; the next night the men and women of another tribe provide the evening's amusement.

Taking away the boys.—On the evening of the day preceding the principal ceremony, all the tribes remove their camps close to the kackaroo, or public ring, where they remain for the night. Some of the men go to the goonambang and camp there, and during the night they swing a bull-roarer at intervals, and the women at the kackaroo beat their rugs and sing in response, whilst the men give the customary shout. At day-break the following morning a number of the men who have been camping with the women at the kackaroo proceed to the goonambang, tapping their boomerangs together as they walk, and join the other men who were there all night. All the men at the goonambang then start towards the kackaroo in single file, marching in a meandering course, and shouting as they go. On reaching the circle, they march once round the outside of it, and then enter it through the opening in the embankment, and continue marching round until all of them are within the ring. They now jump and dance, forming a group in the centre, after which they step out of it, and all the people go and have their breakfast.

After the morning meal has been disposed of, all the young men, accompanied by some of the old fellows, again start away to the goonambang, carrying their spears and other weapons with them, and commence painting their bodies jet black with powdered charcoal and grease. The chiefs and other old men remain with the women at the kackaroo, and preparations for

the ceremony are at once commenced. The relatives of the novices now take them to some convenient place adjacent, and paint them all over with red ochre and grease. Some sheets of bark are now laid on the ground just inside the boundary of the back part of the ring, or, in other words, on that side of it which is farthest from the pathway leading to the goonambang. Leaves are then thickly strewn on this bark, forming a kind of couch, and when the painting of the novices is completed, they are led into the ring and placed sitting down in a row on the couch of leaves—the novices belonging to each tribe being put in a group by themselves on that side of the ring which faces their own country. The headmen now ask the women to come up close, and the mother of each boy sits on the ground just outside the ring near her son¹; his sisters and relatives are a little farther off, and the other women and children outside of the last named. If the earth is damp, owing to recent rains, pieces of bark stripped from the adjacent trees, or heaps of bushes, are laid on the ground for the women to lie on. The mothers of the novices are painted with red and white stripes on the face, chest and arms.

The principal headman then walks along the row of novices, bending down the head of each one until his chin is resting on his breast. The women and children are also told to lie down, and are covered over with rugs and bushes, some of the men running round amongst them to see that this formality is properly carried out. As soon as the mothers are covered over, they are directed to continue making a low humming or buzzing sound, in order that they may not hear the guardians taking away the novices. While the covering is being placed over the women, a man runs away to the goonambang and tells the men there that everything is ready. These men, armed with their boomerangs and nulla-nullas, then start towards the kackaroo, some of them taking up their position on one side of the ring, and some on the other, but the majority of them stand near the front of it—that is, on the side from which the path emerges. The headmen are walking about directing the proceedings, being sometimes in the ring, and sometimes outside of it. All these operations are carried out as speedily as practicable, so as not to keep the women—some of whom have infants at their breasts—any longer under such rigorous concealment than is necessary.

The men who have been assigned as guardians to the novices now step forward, and catching them by the arm, help them to their feet, and lead them noiselessly away along the pathway

¹ If a boy's mother is dead, or too ill to be present, one of his mother's sisters takes her place at the ring.

towards the goonanbang, their heads remaining bent down as they walk along. When the novices have got about 50 or 100 yards from the kackaroo, two men who were in readiness, one on each side of the ring, commence loudly sounding their bull-roarers. All the armed men who are standing round, make a noise by beating together two boomerangs, or any two weapons which they may happen to have with them. This noise is made so that if the string of one of the bull-roarers should break—which sometimes happens—the women would not hear it falling on the ground. One of the men goes into the ring, swinging his bull-roarer, and the other walks along one side near the women. This only lasts a few minutes and then all the men follow after the novices. While this tumultuous noise is going on, the guardians say to each other that they suppose Goign is killing all the women and children in the camp. This puts the novices in a great state of anxiety and alarm, but they are not allowed to speak or gaze about them.

The novices are conducted along the pathway to the goonambang, and are placed sitting down on a couch of small bushes and leaves which have been prepared for them, between the fire and the embankment bounding the ring, their guardians sitting down behind them in such a way that each boy may be said to be sitting in a man's lap. The boys of each tribe sit on the side of the ring nearest the country they have come from.

The Kweealbang Camp.—A short digression will now be made for the purpose of describing how the women are released from their prostrate position, and their subsequent proceedings. As soon as the guardians, novices, and the contingent who follow them are out of sight of the kackaroo, the covering is taken off the women by the men who have charge of them, and they are permitted to rise. First, the mothers of the boys are set free—then the sisters—and lastly, the other women and children are uncovered. The mothers and sisters of the novices generally give vent to tears and lamentations when they find the boys and all the men gone away; and such of the young girls and boys who have never been to a keeparra before, appear to have been very much scared by the strange ordeal through which they have just passed. They immediately pack up all their movables, and start away some distance to another locality which has been previously decided upon by the headmen of the several tribes, and there they erect a new camp, being assisted in this work by some of the old men who have been directed to remain with them. The usual rule of each tribe camping round the local mob, each in the direction of their respective districts, is observed in the erection of this new camp.

The mother of each novice, before leaving the kackaroo, picks some small green bushes, which she ties on the top end of her yamstick. When these leaves get dry, it will be considered about time to bring the boys back to the kweealbang. The sisters of the novices each pick up a piece of burning bark from a fire close by the ring, where they have been smouldering ready for use. These fire-brands, renewed as often as necessary, must be carried by them, when going from place to place, till they again meet their brothers at the kweealbang.

Before finally quitting the main camp, a small sapling is cut down, and one end of it inserted firmly in the ground at the kackaroo, in a slanting position, the elevated end pointing in the direction of the new camp. If it is intended to erect the camp only a little way off, the pole is short; but if the new camp is some distance away, the pole is long. The upper end of this pole is ornamented by having a bunch of green leaves or grass tied around it. This pointer is left for the purpose of guiding to the kweealbang camp any tribe which is expected, but has not yet arrived.

In the proximity of the new camp, on the side of it nearest the place to which the novices will be taken by the headmen, a piece of tolerably level ground is selected, and cleared of all timber and loose rubbish, and a large fire kindled in the middle of it. This cleared space and its adjuncts is called *kweealbang* (fire place, or place of the fire). Here the mothers and sisters of the novices assemble every day for the purpose of singing and dancing, and on these occasions the mothers carry the yamsticks, ornamented with bunches of leaves tied on their ends, already referred to.

Ceremonies in the Bush.—As before stated, the novices are taken to the *goonambang* (excrement place), where they remain till the women and children have departed from the other circle, which would occupy half an hour, or perhaps longer. During this time some old men perform feats of jugglery, and exhibit white stones (quartz crystals) to the novices. These stones are raked out of the heap of earth and ashes in the middle of the ring, and are warm, owing to the fire which is burning on top of the heap. These quartz crystals are believed to be the excrement of Goign.

The novices are then helped to their feet, and are taken to each of the marked trees in succession. The men stoop down, and clear away with their hands all leaves and rubbish from the surface of the ground around each tree, and the novices are brought to this clear space, with their heads bowed, and are told to look up at the marks on the tree. When it is thought that they have seen this sufficiently, they are requested to turn their

faces towards the ground as before. There is a cleared path from one marked tree to another, and the boys are taken along this path to the next tree, when the same formality of clearing a space around its base is gone through, and the boys are again directed to look up. When the men are approaching each tree they throw pieces of stick at it, and dance round it on the clear space referred to, rubbing their hands upon the tree and telling the boys to take particular notice of the marks upon it. The men make a guttural noise as the novices are shown each tree, and also in going from one tree to another.

After the novices have been shown the goonambang, and all the marked trees around it, they are next taken away by their guardians and the old men, several miles into the bush, to a camp called *keelaybang* (urinating place). During the journey thither the novices are not allowed to gaze about them, but have to keep their eyes cast upon the ground at their feet, and their hands held on their stomachs, as they walk along with their guardians. The headmen and young fellows who accompany them, are also a little way behind the novices, shouting and making a great noise as they march along.

At the *keelaybang* a camp is formed by erecting a long, continuous *gunyah* or *mia-mia* in the following manner. (Fig. 3, Plate XXXII.) A row of wooden forks, about 4 or 5 feet high, are first inserted in the ground, and saplings laid from fork to fork, resembling a fence with only one top rail. All along one side of this top rail, reaching from it to the ground, bark and bushes are placed in a slanting position, forming a shelter, covered in on one side, leaving the other side open. Under the open side leaves are thickly strewn on the ground, for the men and boys to lie upon. The back of this shelter is towards the women's camp. A row of fires are lit in front of this shelter, and beyond these fires the surface of the ground is cleared of all loose rubbish and grass for a distance of several yards, the rubbish forming a sort of embankment around the farther side of the cleared space. Such a camp would be formed on some tolerably level ground near a running stream or water-hole.

When the camp at the *keelaybang* has been completed the novices are placed lying down in a row on the leaves which have been spread on the ground under the shelter, and are covered over with rugs, each boy having his guardian beside him. The novices and guardians occupy a central position, and the rest of the men camp under the remainder of the shelter, in both directions. During the day-time the novices are sometimes allowed to sit up, keeping their eyes towards the ground, but are not allowed to speak to anyone. If a boy wants anything

he must touch his guardian, who then commences asking him the most likely things, until he guesses correctly, when the boy nods assent. If he wants to micturate, the guardian leads him out to the fire, and he micturates in the ashes.

On the first night of the arrival of the novices at the keelay-bang, some human excrement is given to them as they sit in the camp. It is laid on pieces of bark, and each boy has to eat the share which is allotted to him by the headmen. At this camp they are also required, on more than one occasion, to drink the urine of some of the men, collected in a coolamin for the purpose. During the celebration of these rites, a bull-roarer is sounded in the neighbouring forest.

At this camp there are pantomimic performances nearly every night, the men dancing and acting on the clear space already described. Sometimes the animal imitated is the kangaroo—the men hopping along one after the other. The iguana is also represented by the men crawling along on the ground, moving their hands and feet like that animal. At other times the soldier bird is imitated; sometimes the flying fox, the native bear, the rock wallaby, the wombat, and other animals. These performances are generally carried on at night by the light of the row of camp fires—the novices sitting in the shelter, while the men are acting on the other side of the fire. Some of the performances are, however, enacted during the day, after the men return from hunting. All these pantomimic representations are largely mixed with abominable and obscene gestures. After the dances and games are over, one of the men sometimes sounds a *goonandhakeea* (excrement-eater) in the bush near the camp. The guardians or some of the other men then shout out, as if addressing some one, "The boys are here yet! Don't interfere with them!" The novices are told that the noise they hear is the voice of Goign, who would come and eat them if he got the chance.

During the early part of each day, the men go out hunting, and bring home the results of the chase, consisting of kangaroos, iguanas, birds, and other game, as well as wild honey. The novices are not allowed to leave the camp, but must sit in the shelter all day with their eyes cast down, some of their guardians remaining with them. Some of the game caught during the day is cooked for the novices, the bones and sinews being taken out of it, and the pieces cut small, so that they may not be able to distinguish what animal's flesh is being given to them. Some of the old men go round to see that the food for the novices is prepared according to rule, and when it is ready the guardians carry it to them.

One or more of the tribes who intended to be present may

have been unavoidably detained on the way, and do not reach the main camp until a few days after the novices have been taken away. Such a tribe, on reaching the main camping place, and finding all the people gone away, would go to the kackaroo, and on seeing the index pole would start away in that direction, and join the other people at the new camp, and take up their quarters on the side nearest their own country. The young fellows belonging to these new arrivals are always eager to be present and assist at the performances at the keelaybang, and accordingly they start out to the camp in the bush. On the way they paint their bodies with powdered charcoal, obtained by burning the bark of the apple tree or bloodwood, and mixing it with grease.

These men, who are called *keerang* (bushes), approach the keelaybang in single file, each man holding a green bush in front of him, which hides his face and body as far as the waist, and as they walk along they make a shrill sound resembling the howling of the *dingo*, or wild dog. On hearing this noise, the guardians and other men present say to each other, "That must be *Thoorkook's* dogs coming to kill the boys; let us cut steps in the trees near us so that the boys can climb up out of their way." A few of the men at the back of the keelaybang commence chopping at a tree, and the boys are helped to their feet, and are put standing in a row near the fires, each boy being supported by his guardian. By this time the *keerang* have reached the clear space at the keelaybang, where they throw down their bushes and spread out in a line in front of the novices, and jump about, swaying their arms, after which they retire to one end of the camp. The other men then go and pick up the bushes thrown down by the *keerang*, and pull the leaves off them, making a continuous grunting noise while so employed. The novices are then put back in their former places, and the *keerang* proceed to erect their quarters, by adding to one end of the same line of forks and bushes already described.

After the novices have been about a week at the keelaybang another mob of men from the women's camp make their appearance during the afternoon. They approach the camp in the same manner, carrying bushes and imitating the native dog, like the previous mob, and the novices are brought out to see them in the same way. The men at the camp pull the leaves off the boughs thrown down by the *keerang*, who sit down at one end of the clear space. After the formalities of their reception have been gone through, the new arrivals, who are not painted black on this occasion, ask some of the other men to accompany them a little way from the camp, where they

hold a consultation as to the date on which the novices will be taken to the kweealbang. If the course of performances in the bush have been completed, the boys may be returned next day, but if some further instruction is necessary, the date is arranged accordingly. The keerang then take their leave, and return to the kweealbang camp. After this visit of the keerang the novices are allowed greater liberty, being permitted to sit up straight in the camp, and occasionally to stand. Having been lying so long, and sitting with their heads bent down, makes them weak and giddy, so that when they try to stand they stagger like a drunken man, and have to be helped to their feet, as before stated, by their guardians. It is therefore necessary to give them a little relaxation to afford them an opportunity of regaining their strength before attempting the journey to the kweealbang. During the last night of the sojourn at the keelaybang the old men sing Goign's song while the boys are lying in the camp.

The day after the arrival of the Keerang—or it may be in a few days' time—very early in the morning, perhaps before sunrise, one of the headmen pretends to see a large brown squirrel going into a hole in a tree growing near the camp, and asks one of the men to catch it. The tail of a squirrel or opossum has previously been fastened on the side of this hole by one of the men, unknown to the boys, to convey the idea that the rest of the animal is within. The novices are then brought out and placed standing in a row between the camp and the fires, with their eyes cast down. A man standing at the butt of the tree commences to cut steps as if going to climb it, and a few of the men run about and throw sticks at the squirrel's tail. Others say, "You should not interfere with Goign's squirrel, or he will come and kill both us and the boys." Two bull-roarers are then heard close by, and some of the men call out to those throwing the sticks, "We told you to beware of Goign—here he comes!" This is said to impress the boys with supernatural terror. The bull-roarers increase in loudness, and come quite near, and the guardians tell the novices to raise their heads and look. They then see two men swinging each a *goonandhakeea* (excrement-eater) on the cleared space beyond the line of fires. The boys are then cautioned by the old men that if ever they tell the women or uninitiated that they have seen this instrument the penalty will be death. The bull-roarers are then given into the hands of the novices, who touch their bodies with them.

Return of the Boys.—A start is now made towards the women's camp, all the men and boys leaving the keelaybang in single file. Some distance on the way they hear the keerang

coming to meet them, cooeing like the dingo as before, and walking in the usual way. The men and boys then change their position, and all march abreast. When the keerang come near, they spread out in a row in front of the men and boys, and throw pieces of bark over them, dancing as they do so. These pieces of bark about 9 inches or a foot long, and 2 or 3 inches wide, are cut off trees or saplings for the purpose. The keerang then march right through the line of men and boys, some going through at one place and some at another, the line opening to let them pass. When they get to the rear, they turn round and again throw pieces of bark over the heads of the men and boys. The latter keep marching on, and the keerang follow them till they arrive at a water-hole or running stream, which has previously been agreed upon as a suitable bathing place. Here a halt is made, and the keerang start away back to the women's camp, and report that the men and boys will arrive in a few hours' time. The women then assemble at the kweealbang fire, and assist the men to cut bark and bushes, which are laid in a ring round the fire ready for use by and bye. The mothers are painted on the chest and arms, and are invested with their personal adornments.

The men and boys who remained at the water-hole or creek in the bush, as soon as the keerang left them, proceeded to wash the colouring matter off their bodies. They went into the water-hole one after the other, and came out in the same way. The novices entered the water first, and as each boy plunged in, the men standing around gave a shout. On coming out of the water-hole they paint their bodies white with pipe-clay, which is diluted in water in one or more *coolamins* which have been cut for the purpose. The men help each other at this work, until every man and boy present have been painted white all over their bodies. The hair on the heads of the novices is now singed, for the purpose of making the women believe that Goign has had them in the fire during their sojourn in the bush. The belt and four tails or kilts are now put upon each boy, as well as head-bands, and bands across the body like shoulder-belts. Strings are bound tightly round the upper arms of the novices to make their muscles swell, which is supposed to cause their arms to grow stronger. The men also decorate themselves in their full regalia.

The journey towards the kweealbang (fire place) is now resumed, all hands starting away from the water-hole in single file; and on going a short distance they are again met by the keerang, who salute them in the same manner as before, and then return to the kweealbang, and report that the novices will shortly arrive. The keerang and other men who have remained

in the camp then muster up all the women, and place them lying down round the fire, a little way outside the ring of bushes before referred to, the women of each tribe being kept in groups by themselves on the side next their own district, and are covered over with rugs and bushes. The mothers of the boys are on the outside, or farthest from the fire, which is composed of pieces of wood and bark, slowly burning within the circle of green bushes which are laid around it. If the ground is wet and cold, pieces of bark are spread upon it for the women to lie upon. As soon as they are covered over, the women keep up a humming noise the same as they did on the morning the novices were taken away from the kackaroo. A few of the old men remain standing near them, armed with spears, to see that the covering is not interfered with.

One of the *keerang* now goes and meets the men and novices—who may be distinguished as the “white mob”—who are by this time waiting just out of sight, and tells them that everything is ready. They then march on quickly, and on arriving at the *kwealbang* they disband, the men and novices belonging to each tribe taking up their position on the side which is in the direction of their country. Their movements are made as noiselessly as possible, so that the women may not hear them coming. All of them then join hands, each man having hold of the hand of the man or boy on his right and on his left, having their faces toward the fire in the centre, and form a complete circle round the women. Fig. 4, Plate XXXII.

The rugs are now taken off the women, and the mothers are called up first, after which the other women are permitted to rise. Owing to the humming noise which they have themselves been making, and the quiet manner in which the men and boys have come in, such of the younger women who have not been to a *keeparra* before are surprised to see the cordon of “white men” standing around them. On account of the novices hair being singed short, and the white paint on their bodies, the mothers are sometimes unable to recognise their own sons. The old men who are in the ring with the women, therefore, conduct each mother to her son where he is standing holding the hand of the men on each side of him. His mother then approaches him, and holds her breast to his face, pretending to suckle him. The sisters of each boy then go up to him, and rub their feet on his ankles. The mothers then pass out under the arms of the men; then the sisters pass out, and lastly all the other women and the men who had charge of them in the ring, and stand close by as spectators of the remainder of the proceedings. The mothers and other women belonging to each tribe go out of the ring of “white men” on the side next their own country. The

pieces of burning bark which the sisters of the novices have been obliged to carry, as before stated, are left at the *kweealbang*.

Two old men, and two of the elder women, now go inside the ring of men and boys, and walk round—a man and a woman going one way, and the other man and woman going in the contrary direction. The men tap the ends of their boomerangs together as they walk, and the women wave their arms. The “white mob,” who are still holding each other’s hands, swing their arms up and down as the men and women march round. Having gone round in this manner two or three times, the men and women come out, and the “white mob” keep closing in nearer and nearer the fire—the guardians and novices being in the centre. The bushes which had previously been laid round the fire are now thrown upon it. The novices are then lifted up in the men’s arms, two or three men, including the guardian, to each boy, who advance and stand on the green bushes, which by this time are emitting a dense smoke, which ascends round the men and boys. As the neophytes are held up in the smoke, the men raise a guttural shout, and the women wave their arms up and down.

When the boys have been sufficiently smoked, their guardians take them away, and they are followed by the other men for about 100 yards. All the men, except the guardians, now return to the fire and stand on the green bushes in turn, until they have all been smoked. The *keerang* and other men who remained at the women’s camp have been standing by as spectators, directing the proceedings all the time—the principal headmen being among them. When the fumigating of the men and novices has been completed the women go away to their camp, which is close by, and the men proceed to theirs—the married men joining their wives later on. In the meantime the novices, who are now called *keeparra*, have been taken a short distance from the main camp, where quarters are prepared for them, and their guardians remain with them.

The next morning the women proceed again to the *kweealbang* and light a fire. The mothers of the novices stand in a row facing the fire, the other women being behind them (Fig. 5, Plate XXXII). Each mother has her *yamstick* with her, and sticks it into the ground beside her, the top end of it being ornamented with the bunch of bushes which were fastened to it the morning the novices were taken away from the *kackaroo*. Nets are spread in a line upon the ground, and beside them are some *coolamins* containing water. When all is ready, some of the old men who are assisting the women give a signal, and the guardians and novices approach the *kweealbang*. The mothers

wave their yamsticks, and when the men and boys come near, the women shout, and throw pieces of bark over the men's heads. The guardians also throw pieces of bark over the heads of the women. The novices are placed sitting down on the nets, and bend forward and drink water out of the coolamins which are on the ground in front of them. Then the mothers go back to their own quarters, and the novices are taken by their guardians a short distance away, where they make a camp. That night a white stone is given to each neophyte by some of the old men; it is put into a small bag, and is fastened to the boy's girdle. The novices are also forbidden to eat certain kinds of food until relieved from this restriction by the old men.

Conclusion.—The following day, the strange tribes begin to disperse, and start away on their return journey to the districts from which they have come. The local tribe also shift away to another part of their own hunting grounds. Each tribe take their own novices away with them, and put them through the remaining stages of initiation in their own country. This is done in the following manner:—At the end of a certain time of probation, which is fixed by the headmen, the neophytes, painted and dressed as men of the tribe, are brought to a fire near the men's camp, where there is food ready laid on rugs spread upon the ground. All the women are there, and the novices sit down and eat the food which has been prepared for them. That night they camp in sight of the men's quarters, and each succeeding night they come a little closer, until at last they get right into the single men's camp. From the time the novices left the kweealbang until now they have been compelled to carry pieces of burning bark everywhere they went, but they are now released from carrying the firebrands any more. If any of the boys are very young, they may be required to carry a firestick till their hair grows as long as it was before being singed at the water-hole in the bush, as already described. This is said to be done to cause the novices' hands and arms to grow stronger. The novices are now given a new name, and are permitted to mix with the men, but must not go among the women until they have attended a few more keeparras, and have lost their boyish voice. After they have qualified themselves by passing through all the stages of probation attached to the initiation ceremonies of their tribe, the novices are allowed to take a wife from among those women whom the class laws permit them to marry.

In some parts of the tract of country to which the ceremonies herein described apply, one of the front incisor teeth was formerly extracted during the time the novices were away

at the keelaybaug, but as this custom is not now enforced anywhere, I have not included it in this paper. From conversations which I have had with very old black fellows, there appear to be some grounds for supposing that the custom was not universally carried out in the districts referred to. I am now making further investigations into this matter, the results of which will be included in a subsequent paper.

Adjoining the north-west corner of the country peopled by the tribes dealt with in this article, is a small community occupying the Tableland of New England, whose initiation ceremonies have been described by me in a paper contributed to the Royal Society of Victoria.¹

APPENDIX.

The Dhalgai Ceremony.

A short or abridged form of initiation ceremony, called *Dhalgai*, is sometimes adopted by the same tribes who inhabit the tract of country dealt with in this paper. The *Dhalgai* is used only when there is no time, or it is otherwise inconvenient, to hold the complete ceremony of the *Keeparra*. If a tribe has a novice who is old enough to be initiated, and it will be some time yet before another *keeparra* will be held, it is sometimes thought desirable or politic to inaugurate him into the rank of manhood. No prepared ground is required, nor is it necessary that the neighbouring tribes should be summoned, as is imperative in the case of the *keeparra*, but each tribe initiate their own boys. The following is a brief outline of the *Dhalgai* ceremony :

The novice, *gooroomin*, is taken away some morning from the camp by three or four of the old men, under pretext of going out hunting, and they escort him to a place previously agreed upon among themselves. A number of the other men also start away from the camp in a different direction, so that neither the women nor the novice may suspect anything unusual. When this latter mob get out of sight of the camp, they change their course, and repair to the place which has been fixed upon for the initiation of the boy—probably some well-known water-hole.

The men who have the novice in charge are the first to reach the appointed locality, and when they get near the water-hole they sit down, and one of them goes on ahead, and lights a fire in a level, open piece of ground. This man then returns to where he left his comrades, and one of them, who is a brother-

¹ "The Burbung of the New England Tribes, N.S. Wales," "Proc. Roy. Soc. Victoria," ix (N.S.), 120-136.

in-law, actual or potential, of the novice, then bends his head upon his breast, and conducts him to the fire, and places him sitting down a little way from it.

The other detachment of men, who went away in a different direction, now approach, walking in single file, with a bush in each hand, held up in front of them so that their faces are not visible. These men, who are called *yillay*, are painted with white stripes on the face, chest and limbs. As they march along, they make a noise like the native dog, and on getting close to the boy, they throw pieces of stick over his head, which fall to the ground just beyond him. He is permitted to raise his head and look at them, and then cast his eyes on the ground as before. They then throw away their bushes, and, spreading out in front of the novice, stoop down and commence scraping the rubbish off the ground with their hands. They keep stepping backwards and scraping, until they have a small space cleared of all leaves and small sticks in front of the novice, who is still sitting on the ground with his head bowed.

The *yillay* then step into the space which they have thus cleared and commence to jump and dance, and the boy is told to look at them. One of their member then steps out in front of the rest on this cleared space and swings the *goonandhakeea*, and the novice is raised to his feet and is directed to look. The old men tell him the mysteries connected with the use of the instrument which he now sees before him. They then step up quite close to the novice in a menacing attitude, with their weapons in their hands, and threaten him that if ever he divulges what he has now seen, he will be killed, either by the hands of his own tribesmen, or by supernatural agency. After this ordeal is over, he is allowed to examine the sacred instrument.

All the men then sit down near the fire, the neophyte being amongst them. He is then painted as a man of the tribe, and invested with a complete set of man's attire, and the old men show him quartz crystals and give him advice as to his future conduct. The ceremony is now over, and on returning to the camp that afternoon, the novice remains in the men's quarters, and does not go back to his mother, or his small brothers, or sisters any more. He must, however, keep away from the women's quarters and abstain from eating certain kinds of food during a period to be determined by the headmen. At the next keeparra which is held in the community, the neophyte will be shown all the marked trees, and the secret ceremonies which are enacted at the goonambang, the keelaybang, and all the final proceedings at the women's camp.

A novice who has been admitted to the status of manhood by

means of the Dhalgai ceremony is called a Dhalgai man, in contradistinction to those who have been initiated at the Keeparra, who are always spoken of as Keeparra men.

Explanation of Plate XXXII.

A brief explanation of the Figures shown on the Plate will now be given—the reader being referred to the text for further details.

- Fig. 1 is the *Kackaroo*, 28 feet by 23 feet: *a* is a group of two boys; *b* a group of four boys; *c* and *d* groups of three boys each. Outside the embankment are the mothers of the boys, and the other women farther back *a'*, *b'*, *c'*, *d'*, *e* and *f* are the men swinging the bull-roarers—one of them having entered the oval. The other men are not shown as it would unnecessarily crowd the Plate.
- Fig. 2 represents the *Goonambang* (Excrement Place), 31 feet by 26 feet, with the heap of earth, *e*, in the centre. The four groups of boys, *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*, are represented sitting between the heap and the embankment, but it has not been thought necessary to show the positions of the men—this having been sufficiently explained in the description of the keeparra ground. The track, *yuppang*, leading from the *goonambang* to the *kackaroo*, is shown by a dotted line in this as well as in Fig. 1.
- Fig. 3 represents the *Keelaybang* (Micturating Place), *a*, *b*, being the line of gunyahs or shelters, *c*, *c* the row of fires, and *d* the clear space where the men perform their plays and dances.
- Fig. 4 is the *Kweealbang* (Fire Place), *g* is the fire in the centre, around which a heap of green bushes, *f*, are laid; *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, are the mothers of the novices, and the other women, lying down, covered over with rugs and bushes; *e*, *e*, *e*, *e*, is the circle of men and boys painted white, and having their hands joined together; *h* is the way the men and novices have come in from the bush.
- Figs. 6 to 13 represent the *dharrook* carved upon trees growing around the *goonambang*, which are fully described in previous pages.
- Fig. 5 represents the place where the novices are brought in, and are given a drink of water; *a*, *a*, are the mothers standing in a row at the fire, *f*,—the other women, *g*, being behind them. On the other side of the fire is a row of coolamins, *b*, *b*, containing water: *c*, *c*, is the row of novices, and *d*, *d*, are the guardians; *e*, *e*, are the other men present; and *h* is the direction from which they have just come.

LIFE HISTORY of an AGHORI FAKIR; with *Exhibition of the Human Skull used by him as a Drinking Vessel, and Notes on the similar use of Skulls by other Races.* By HENRY BALFOUR, M.A.

[WITH PLATES XXXIII—XXXIV.]

BEING anxious to obtain for the Pitt Rivers Museum a specimen of the human calvaria used as a drinking vessel by Aghori Fakirs in India, I wrote to Surgeon Captain H. E. Drake Brockman, I.M.S., asking him to try and obtain one for me. This he not only succeeded in doing, having obtained

