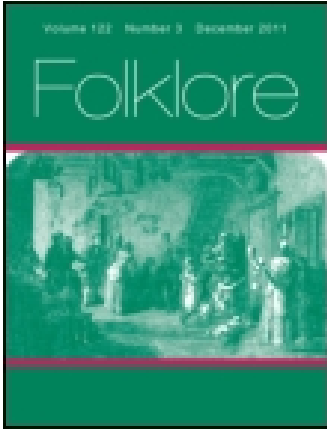


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## Folklore Notes from Western Australia

R. H. Mathews

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children, one after the other, pointing to the fingers, and receives the stereotyped replies, and the fingers retire; finally the boys catch hold of each other's ears, and those of the matronly girl, and form a round group, sitting and exclaiming "*Kia mia, Kia mia*" (a favourite expression of children, devoid of meaning), accompanied with giggling laughter and movements of the bodies backwards and forwards; and thus the game ends.

M. N. VENKATASVAMI.

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FOLKLORE NOTES FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

THE following are some superstitions and legendary stories current among the natives around Albany, Blackwood River, Mount Barker, and thence to Esperance Bay, which have been collected at my request by Mr. Thomas Muir, J.P., of Deeside Station. He has known the country between Perth and Esperance Bay since 1844, and has constantly employed some of the aborigines to work for him during that period.

*Evil Spirits.*—The natives believed that it was evil spirits who struck forest trees and splintered them during a thunderstorm. When they saw a small tree which had been shattered by lightning, they would laugh and say to each other that the spirit who had done that was only a slender fellow, because a powerful spirit would have practised his skill on a larger tree.

If an evil spirit, or *wein*, came to a man in the bush and he attempted to strike at it, he would only hit himself on whatever part of the body he tried to hit the spirit upon. His only means of escape from the attack of a *wein* was to run and get on top of the nearest white-ant hill; then he was just as safe as Tam o' Shanter when he had passed the keystone of the bridge.

*Bird Myth.*—A little bird known as the Flycatcher, or Fantail, was formerly a wicked man with a bushy beard, always going about doing mischief and carrying tales. When the blacks see one of these birds they kill it if they can. It still has whiskers as in times of yore, which are represented by a little bunch of greyish feathers on each jaw.

*How Fresh Water was first Obtained.*—In ancient times all

the coast tribes drank salt water. The eagle-hawk, *wallitch*, never drank with the rest, but always went back into the interior. One day the fish-hawk, *molar*, watched him going to a forked tree, from which he removed a piece of bark and had a drink. After the eagle-hawk went away back to his camp, the fish-hawk approached the tree for the purpose of making investigations. As soon as *molar* lifted up the piece of bark, the water flowed out in torrents, and filled all the hollow places, making creeks, rivers, and lakes as they now appear.

*The White-topped Rocks, near Cape Chatham.*—In those olden days there was a large plain extending from the main land out to the White-topped Rocks, about nine miles out from Cape Chatham. On one occasion two women went far out on the plain, digging roots. One of the women was heavy with child, and the other woman had a dog with her. After a while they looked up, and saw the sea rushing towards them over the great plain. They both started running towards the high land about Cape Chatham, but the sea soon overtook them and was up to their knees. The woman who had the dog picked it up out of the water and carried it on her shoulders. The woman who was far advanced in pregnancy could not make much headway, and the other was heavily handicapped with the weight of the dog. The sea, getting deeper and deeper, soon overwhelmed them both, and they were transformed into the White-topped Rocks, in which the stout woman and the woman carrying the dog can still be seen.

*The Making of Mount Johnston and other Hills.*—On another occasion, there was a party of natives cooking a big heap of roots which they had gathered. A dispute arose about the partition of the food, and one of the men, who was a *mulgar* or wizard, drew his foot and kicked the heap of roots in all directions. Some of them became Mount Johnston, whilst some more were turned into other rocky hills in that locality, upon which large root-shaped rocks can still be distinguished.

*The Origin of Fire.*—In olden times the bandicoot had the monopoly of fire. It was shut up in a nut, which he always carried about with him, secreted. The other people noticed that his meat was always tender and different from theirs, and they asked him the reason of it. He told them that he laid it on a rock, and

let it cook by the heat of the mid-day sun. They also observed that the barbs were neatly fastened on to his spears with gum, and that all his weapons were better finished than those of other people. Repeated inquiries as to how he managed all these things elicited nothing definite, and consequently the pigeon, *watt*, and the sparrowhawk, *kurringar*, were appointed to watch him when out hunting. About the middle of the day they saw smoke rising from where he was camping, and, as they could not make out what it was, they stole upon him unawares. As soon as the bandicoot saw them he commenced putting the fire into the usual receptacle; but the sparrowhawk, who was always very quick in his movements, made a sudden rush and secured some of it, with which he set fire to the surrounding bush. Every tree, from the hardest to the softest, got a share of the fire, and from them the blacks have obtained it ever since.

*Why Lakes are Salt.*—The natives of the Kimberley district of Western Australia believe that a supernatural monster, in serpent form, made all the rivers as he travelled inland from the sea. The big waterholes which occur along the courses of the rivers are places where he rested at night. Once he camped for a long time at the shallow lake into which the Sturt Creek empties, and it is owing to his urine that the water there is saline. The saltness of other lakes in that part of the country is ascribed to the same cause. This creature is known as *Ranbal* in some localities, and as *Wonnaira* in others.

R. H. MATHEWS.

Parramatta, N.S. Wales.

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### SCRAPS OF ENGLISH FOLKLORE, III.

#### *Worcestershire.*

The following items were collected from servants, old residents, school children, etc., in the neighbourhood of Hartlebury during the years 1900-1, except when another date is affixed.

“Crop your hair in the moon’s wax,  
Ne’er cut it in her wane,  
And then of a bald head  
You never shall complain.”