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A paper on "Old Scandinavian Civilisation among the Modern Esquimaux" was read by Dr. E. B. TYLOR. This paper, with the discussion thereon, will be printed in a subsequent number of the "Journal."

Dr. E. B. TYLOR then read the following paper on behalf of the author:—

*On some AUSTRALIAN BELIEFS.*

By A. W. HOWITT, Esq., F.G.S.

IN this paper I shall deal with some of the beliefs obtaining in certain tribes which once occupied a large part of South-Eastern Australia, and whose scattered remnants still inhabit the hunting-grounds of their forefathers. My information has been obtained during many conversations with those tribesmen who still remain.

The following are the tribes to which I refer:—the Kurnai, of Gippsland; the Woi-worŭng, who inhabited the country north of the Yarra River; the Wolgal, of the country through which flow the Upper Murray, the Murrumbidgee, and the Tumut Rivers; the Theddora of Omer, and the Mitta-Mitta River; the Ngarego, of the Maneroo Tableland, and the Murring of the coast between Mallagoota Inlet and the Shoalhaven River; to these may be added two tribes which were allied to the Woi-worŭng, and whose men were also, as were those of the latter, called Kŭlin. Of these tribes, one lived about the sources of the Wimmera River, and the other on the Avoca River. The latter belonged to the well-known Jajowrong people, and its special tribal name was "Jŭpa-galk-wournditch."<sup>1</sup>

I may note here that the words *Kŭrnai*, *Kŭlin*, and *Murring* are all synonymous, meaning "men," in distinction to other blackfellows whom the respective *Kŭrnai*, *Kŭlin*, or *Murring* designate "wild men," "snakes," "come-by-night," or by other similar terms of contempt or fear. *Woi-worŭng* (*worŭng*, tongue), *Wolgal* (*wol*, no; *gal*, of, or belonging to), and *Ngarego* are the names of languages which are used as tribal designations.

The Wolgal, Ngarego, and coast Murring are, in fact, all "Murring," and thus the word indicates a still larger related group, and this group is again indicated by the community of initiation ceremonies. I have used the word "coast Murring," as merely a convenient term to distinguish these people from the allied mountain Murring (Ngarego).

<sup>1</sup> *Jŭpa-galk*, the so-called native myrtle (*Bursaria spinosa*); *galk*= wood, or tree; *wournditch*=men, or people.

Thus, on reference to a map, it will be seen that the beliefs which I am going to describe cover no small part of the Australian continent.

*The Physical Universe.*—All the tribes named held the belief that the earth is a flat surface, surmounted by a solid vault—the sky. The Kŭrnai believed that beyond the sky there was a country inhabited by the spirits *Brewin*, *Baukan*, and the *Mrarts* (ghosts). The Woi-worŭng called this trans-celestial land—“*Tharan-gulk-bek*,” i.e., the gum-tree country. It was believed by them to have trees, streams, and to be otherwise similar to the earth. They further believed that, somewhere in the mountains in the north-east of Victoria, the vault was propped up by poles, the rotting of which might cause the sky to fall, and the drowning of all people through the bursting of the clouds, which they regarded as reservoirs of water.<sup>1</sup>

The Ngarego and Wolgal believed that beyond the sky (*Kŭ-lŭmbi*), there was another country similar to the earth, with “rivers and trees.” Similar beliefs were held by the Wimmera Kŭlin and the Jŭpagalk.

*The human individual during and after life.*—The Kŭrnai believe that each human individual has within him a spirit, which they call *Yambo*. This *Yambo*, it was supposed, could, during sleep, leave the body; could confer with other disembodied spirits; could even wend its way to the celestial vault, beyond which lies “ghost-land.” Indeed, this belief is still held, perhaps, by all but those who have been educated at the Mission stations. With the Woi-worŭng, this human spirit was called *Mŭrŭp*. It was supposed that the *Mŭrŭp* could leave the body during sleep, and the exact period of departure was said to be during the “snoring” of the sleeper. It was also believed that the *Mŭrŭp* of an individual could be sent from him by magic, as, for instance, when a hunter incautiously went to sleep when out hunting, or at a distance from his camp. The *Mŭrŭp* being thus temporarily banished, and the wakening of the victim prevented, his enemy was supposed to abstract his kidney fat, and thereby cause his ultimate death. The belief in the temporary departure of the human spirit during sleep still exists in the last surviving Woi-worŭng, after almost a lifetime of contact with the civilisation of Melbourne. Quite recently “King William” told me that the *Mŭrŭp* of his son, who had been taken to

<sup>1</sup> Buckley (“the Wild White Man”) says in his “Life and Adventures” (John Morgan, Tasmania, 1882), p. 57: “They have a notion that the world is supported by props which are in the charge of a man who lives at the further end of the earth. They were dreadfully alarmed on one occasion when I was with them by news passed from tribe to tribe that unless they could send him a supply of tomahawks for cutting some more props, and some more ropes to tie them, the earth would go by the run, and all hands would be smothered.”

the Melbourne Hospital, where he afterwards died, appeared to his comrade during sleep, and took him "up a rope, and went through a hole in the sky." Then, looking down, said, "Tell my father I will wait for him here till he comes." William is even yet searching in the mountains of the Upper Yarra River for a block of stone covered with gold, which he had seen during sleep. As he put it, "My *Mūrūp* has not yet taken me far enough in the ranges—I have been to every place near."

The *Mūrūp* of the living was supposed to be able to communicate with other *Mūrūps*, either of sleepers or of those who were dead. It could wend its way to the sky, but not beyond it to the "gum-tree country."

I have, when treating elsewhere of the Kŭrnai, given instances of their belief in the reality of dreams. It may be said of the aborigines I am now concerned with, and probably of all others, that their dreams are to them as much realities in one sense, as are the actual events of their waking life. It may be said that in this respect they fail to distinguish between the subjective and objective impressions of the brain, and regard both as real events.

The human spirit became after death what we may call a "ghost." With the Kŭrnai it was a *Mrart*; but I am inclined to think that the *Yambo* was also generally supposed to exist for some little time after death as *Yambo*, and before it became *Mrart*; for I have heard the ghost of the dead spoken of as *Yambo*, or sometimes as *Turdi-Kŭrnai*, *i.e.*, dead man. With the Ngarego and Wolgal, the dead man's ghost was *Bŭlabong*; with the coast Murring, *Tŭlŭgal*, *i.e.*, "belonging to the dead." Taking the term "ghost" as representing all these words, I may now proceed to note some further beliefs.

I have but little to add to those of the Kŭrnai, as I have described them elsewhere, excepting that the ghosts were believed to live upon plants, and that they could revisit the earth at will, to communicate with the wizards, or on being summoned by them.

The Woi-worŭng believed that the ghost wandered, at least for a time, in the hunting-grounds it had used when embodied, but this must, I think, have been after ascending to the sky. I learn that it was thought that, at the very first of the final separation of the *Mūrūp* from the body, it proceeded to the west, and there falling over the edge of the earth, went into the receptacle of the sun—the *Ngamat*; thence ascending in the bright tints of sunset to the sky.<sup>1</sup> I have an account how a celebrated

<sup>1</sup> This, I think, explains why the white man was called "Ngamajet." Buckley says (*loc. cit.*, p. 54) that at the completion of the burial of a man "one word was uttered *Animadiate*, which means, 'He is gone to be made a white man, but not for ever.'" This could scarcely have been the case, one would think, before

wizard pursued the escaping spirit, and returned successful, saying that he had overtaken it just as it was falling over into Ngamal, and that he had seized it by the middle, and brought it back captive under his 'possum rug. Being thus restored to the "still breathing body," the sick man recovered consciousness, and revived.

The ghost was supposed to return at times to the grave and contemplate its mortal remains. William Beiruk, in speaking to me of this, put it in this way: "Sometimes the *Mūrūp* comes back and looks down into the grave, and it may say—'Hallo, there is my old 'possum rug; there are my old bones.'" The ghost was supposed to kill game with magically deadly spears. It was even believed that where fires were left burning in the bush where hunters had cooked part of their game, the ghosts would come after they had gone and warm themselves, and consume the fragments. Finally, the ghosts were believed to inhabit the "gum-tree country" beyond the sky, or perhaps, to speak more correctly, the country which was the other side of the vault. Such beliefs as these were probably held by the Wimmera Kūlin, for it was supposed by them that a boy who saw his mother's ghost sitting by her grave afterwards became a wizard.

The Ngarego and Wolgal also thought that the ghost for a time haunted the neighbourhood of the grave, and that it could kill game, light fires, and make camps for itself. In the case of the interment, not many years ago, of a man at the Snowy River, the survivors were much alarmed during the night following the burial by what they supposed to be the ghost of the dead man prowling round the camp, and, as one of them said, "coming after his wife."

According to the old men of the Ngarego and Wolgal respectively, the ghost (*Būlabong*) was met on its departure by the Great Spirit *Tharamūlūn*, who conducted it to its future home beyond the sky.

These beliefs as to the human spirit in and after life I find to be widespread; and they are important in their bearing. The *Yambo*, the *Mūrūp*, the *Būlabong*, or whatever name we choose to take, clearly represents during life the self-consciousness of the individual. The apparent power of this self-consciousness to desert the body during sleep for a time, leads naturally up to the further belief that death is merely its permanent separation from the body. Moreover, as during dreams the "ghosts" of others who were dead were apparently perceived, the belief is

the white men arrived. Buckley, I suspect, has mixed up the old belief as to the *Ngamat*, and has given the word *Ngamajet*—*i.e.*, one returned from *Ngamat*—as "Animadiate."

natural that the individual still existed after death, although generally invisible to the living. This was brought out very clearly to me by the argument of one of the Kūrñai, whom I asked whether he really thought his *Yambo* could "go out" during sleep. He said: "It must be so, for when I sleep I go to distant places; I see distant people; I even see and speak with those that are dead."

Such beliefs as these explain much that would otherwise seem unmeaning or inexplicable in the tribal burial customs. The Kūrñai, as I have described elsewhere, rolled up the dead tightly, and corded him in a sheet of bark. They carried the corpse for a long period; in other words, the dead member of the group accompanied it in its accustomed wanderings. That the ghost of the deceased was supposed to accompany and watch over its living relatives is evident from the custom of carrying the "dead hand."<sup>1</sup> Not only was it invoked in times of danger from mortal foes, but also, as I have lately traced out, at times when calamities seemed to threaten the tribe. I learn that when the *aurora australis* was seen, all the Kūrñai in the camp swung the "dead hand" towards the alarming portent, shouting such words as these: "Send it away! send it away! do not let it burn us up!"<sup>2</sup>

It seems to have been universal with all the tribes I am concerned with that the dead man was dressed in his full corroboree costume when buried, or when rolled up for transport.

The Woi-worñg buried their dead in circular pits. The corpse, with its hands crossed, was corded tightly so that the knees were drawn up towards the head, and the body was usually laid on its side as if in sleep. With the dead was buried his personal property and his stone tomahawk, but, at least in the section of the Woi-worñg to which William Beiruk belonged, no weapons, "lest the dead man might hurt some one." But in one instance of a noted hunter, his throwing-stick (*mūrri-wñn*) was stuck in the grave by his right side, "so that he might have it handy." The grave was then filled in with wood, stones, and earth.

A different practice seems to have obtained among the Kūlin of the Wimmera. In this tribe the dead man was left lying in his hut for two or three days before his relatives tied him up tight; they bewailed him for about a week in all. He was then put either in a hollow tree or on a raised stage, round

<sup>1</sup> See "Kamilaroi and Kūrñai," p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> It seems to me very suggestive that on this occasion there was a temporary reversion to intersexual communism, *i.e.*, by the exchange of wives. This exchange is connected with a supposed impending supernatural calamity which the deceased "ancestors" were at least able to prevent, and I suspect that they were supposed to have caused it. On this view the temporary reversion to intersexual communism appears like a propitiatory or expiatory ceremony.

which his bereaved friends camped for a while. They then went away and only returned after a time, when the corpse might be supposed to have become dry. The head and arms were cut off and carried generally by his widow, if he left one, and were then probably buried with her when she died. The leg-bones were used for magical purposes.

With the Omeo Theddora the corpse was interred much as I have described with the Woi-worūng; but here there was often a side chamber at the bottom of the pit, into which the tightly-corded corpse was thrust. Sometimes a sort of cave was dug in a bank for a grave. For a good instance of burial by this tribe, I am indebted to Mr. John O'Rourke, of Woolgulmerang, near the Snowy River. The account he gave me I have since verified by inquiry from one of those present. This man said as follows:—"When we were at the Snowy River one of the men died. We dug a hole in the river bank, and as we were putting him in it we thought he moved. We were much frightened, and all fell back except old Nukong,<sup>1</sup> who stood forward and said, 'What are you doing that for? why are you trying to frighten us?' We rammed up the hole with wood and stones and earth, and went away."

The Ngarego and Wolgal buried in the same manner; indeed, in the instance just quoted, the persons present were Theddora and Ngarego. With these latter the personal property of the deceased was buried with him—his tomahawk, his paints, amulets and magical substances, such as quartz crystals (*Io-i-a*).

The coast Murring about Broulee rolled up the dead man much as did the Kurnai; but before interring him, the corpse was laid at the root of a tall tree, up which the headman (*gommera*) climbed, followed by all the men present. He then shouted out questions to the ghost of the deceased, and was supposed to receive replies—such, for instance, as to the person who had occasioned the death.

In all these cases we find the tightly cording of the dead man, and the belief that his ghost still lingered near or revisited the spot. It seems to me not only that these aborigines believed that the ghost could follow the survivors, but also that the dead man himself, unless tightly bound and buried under tightly-rammed logs and earth, might likewise follow them in the body.<sup>2</sup> Bearing in mind the belief in the existence of the human individual independently of the body, in the power of this "spirit" to wander invisible during the sleep of the body, in the individuality as a

<sup>1</sup> As to Nukong see "Kamilaroi and Kurnai," p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> Buckley was thought to be a dead man named Murrangurk returned to life. He says that when the blacks found him he had a piece of a broken spear in his hand, taken from the grave of Murrangurk.



“ghost” after death, present with the survivors, yet invisible, it is easy to arrive at some of the motives which render these savages so averse to speak of the dead. In one instance, when one of the Kurnai was spoken to about a dead friend, soon after the decease, he said, looking round uneasily, “Do not do that; he might hear you and kill me !”

It is also evident that while any one might be able to communicate with the “ghosts” during sleep, it was only the wizards who were able to do so in waking hours.<sup>1</sup>

*Ghost-land.*—Although the ghosts were supposed to wander, for a time or at will, in their accustomed hunting-grounds, yet their peculiar home was the trans-celestial country. Being disembodied, the *Yambo*, the *Mūrūp*, the *Būlabong* could for the first time pass from the earthly home of the living to the celestial home of the dead.

The ghosts were indeed in this aspect the departed ancestors, and as such may be supposed to have with them the defunct headmen and wizards of the tribe. The Supreme Spirit—who is believed in by all the tribes I refer to here either as a benevolent, or more frequently as a malevolent, being—it seems to me represents the defunct headman. The *Brewin* of the Kurnai is the headman with the attributes of malevolent magic powers.

<sup>1</sup> I cannot resist quoting from a correspondent in Northern Queensland—Mr. J. C. Muirhead, of Elgin Downs. His statements illustrate forcibly what may be called the “theory” of death and burial with the Australian aborigines. I condense very much Mr. Muirhead’s account, but I preserve as far as possible his own words:—“When a strong black dies they think that some other black has put a spell on him. The corpse is placed upon a frame and covered over with boughs. These boughs must be of some tree of the same ‘class’ as the dead. Suppose that he were of the Banbe class division these boughs of the broad-leaved boxtree would be used, for this tree is Banbe. Men of the Malleria class (of which Banbe and Kurgila are the subdivisions) would place the boughs over him. After placing the body on a frame, which is raised on four forked sticks, they carefully work the ground underneath with their feet into dust, and smooth it so that the slightest mark or print can be observed. Then they make a big fire close to the spot and retire to their camp. Before leaving they mark a number of trees so that this ‘blazed line’ leads back to the frame with the corpse. This is to prevent the dead man following them. The following morning the relations of the deceased inspect the ground under the corpse. If the track or mark of some animal, bird, reptile, &c., is found, they infer from it the totem of the person who caused the death of their relative. For all things belong to one or other of the two great classes, Malleria and Wūthera. For instance, if the track of a native dog were seen they would know that the offender was Banbe = Malleria, for to this sub-class and class does the Dingo belong.”

I find that a similar practice obtained among some of the Wimmera River Kūlin. With them the ground over the grave was carefully smoothed, and in the following morning it was examined for footsteps or tracks, which were held to be those of the culprit. The Jūpagalk Kūlin had a somewhat different practice. The wizard of the tribe or lesser tribal group watched at the grave during the night. He was supposed to see the spirit of the offender peeping among the trees and bushes at the grave of the victim; thus recognising the culprit the wizard was in a position to secure vengeance upon him by means of charms, thus bewitching him to death in turn.



The *Būnji* of the Woi-worūng—indeed I think I may safely say of all the Kūlin tribes—seems to have been regarded much in the light in which William Beiruk described to me the *Ngūrūngeta*, or headman of his tribe, “a man who did no one any harm, and who spoke straight.”

*Tharamūlūn*, or *Thrūmūlūn*, or *Daramūlūn*, as the word is variously pronounced in the different Murring languages, was the Supreme Spirit believed in from the sea-coast across to the northern boundary claimed by the Wolgal, about Yass and Gundagai, and from Omeo to at least as far as the Shoalhaven River, in a line approximately east and west. He was not, it seems to me, everywhere thought to be a malevolent being, but he was dreaded as one who could severely punish the trespasses committed against those tribal ordinances and customs whose first institution is ascribed to him. He, it is said, taught the Murring all the arts they knew; he instituted the ceremonies of Initiation of Youths; he made the original *Mūdji* (the *Turndun* of the Kūrna); ordered the animal names to be assumed by men; and directed what rules should be observed as to the food permitted or forbidden to certain persons. It was taught to the Murring youths, at their initiation, that a breach of these food rules would not only be visited with dire consequences by the *Io-e-a* (medicine) of the forbidden food animal itself, or by actual punishment by the *gommeras* who in dreams could see the offence committed; but it was taught also that *Tharamūlūn* himself watched the youths from the sky, prompt to punish, by sickness or death, the breach of his ordinances. These prohibitions were only relaxed as the youths proved themselves worthy, and in some cases appear to have been perpetual. In speaking to two old men (Wolgal and Ngarego) about the prohibition of certain articles of food, they said that neither of them had ever been permitted to eat Emu eggs, and on my asking what would be the consequence of their doing so, one said, the other assenting, “I could not do that; *He* would be very angry, and perhaps I should die.”

The knowledge of *Tharamūlūn*, and his attributes and powers, was only communicated to the youths at their initiation, and was regarded as something eminently secret, and not on any account to be divulged to women or children. It is said that the women among the Ngarego and Wolgal knew only that a great being lived beyond the sky, and that he was spoken of by them as *Papang* (father). This seemed to me, when I first heard it, to bear so suspicious a resemblance to a belief derived from the white men that I thought it necessary to make careful and repeated inquiries. My Ngarego and Wolgal informants, two of them old men, strenuously maintained that it was so before

the white men came. They said that the knowledge of the name of *Tharamūlūn* was imparted to themselves only at their initiation by the old men, and that the women then, as now, only knew of *Tharamūlūn* by the name of *Papang*. This name of *Tharamūlūn* is to them so sacred, that even in speaking to me of it when no one else was present but ourselves, the old men have done so in almost whispers, and have used elliptical expressions to avoid the word itself, such as "He," "the man," or "the name I told you of." This I have found exactly paralleled by the reluctance of my Woi-worūng informant to mention the name of *Būnjil* when speaking of his supernatural powers, although he did not show so much reluctance when repeating to me the "folklore" in which the "Great Spirit" of the Kūlin plays a part. He also used the expressions "He" or "Him," and on one occasion went so far as to substitute the Woi-worūng gesture signs, which mean *Būnjil*. He also said, when pointing out to me the star which is *Būnjil* (Fomalhaut), that when he was a boy about ten years of age, "before the white men came to Melbourne," his grandfather led him out of the camp one night, and pointing to the star with his throwing-stick (*murriwūn*), said: "You are now growing up, and will soon be able to kill kangaroos and native bears, and you will be a man; you see *Būnjil* up there, and he can see you and all you do down here."<sup>1</sup>

Here, again, I believe that the dread of offending an unseen, powerful, possibly present, spirit, lies much at the root of the disinclination to utter the name of *Tharamūlūn* or *Būnjil*.

I found that so far as concerned the Theddora the ignorance of *Tharamūlūn* was not so complete in one sole-surviving woman as the old Ngarego and Wolgal men stated as regarded their women. The Theddora woman said, when I asked her who was *Tharamūlūn*: "He lives up there (pointing to the sky); I only know that; and also that when the boys are made young men he comes down to frighten them. I once heard him coming with a noise like thunder." She here evidently referred to that part of the initiation ceremonies at which women are not permitted to be present, and at which the *mudjis* (*Turndun*) are swung with a noise which is of course proportionate to their size and construction. I do not know what the size of the instrument was which the Theddora used, but that of their neighbours the Murring was, to judge from one which I have seen, of unusual size, and must have made a very loud roaring noise.

There does not seem to have been any restriction among

<sup>1</sup> This identification of *Bunjl* with Fomalhaut agrees with Mr. Dawson's statement ("Australian Aborigines," Melbourne, 1881). In a former paper, "From Mother-right to Father-right," at p. 16, I gave as one of the totems a *Aquilæ*. I suspect that my informant may possibly have intended to point out Fomalhaut when he showed me Altair

the Kurnai, as to the women knowing about *Brewin*. This may be connected with the greater participation of the women in the ceremonies of initiation, which were, so far as I have observed, spoken of before them, with the exception of the three portions at which the *Turndun* was shown to the novices: this was carefully concealed from the women. No Kurnai woman ever would call *Brewin* "father"; he was dreaded as being very malignant; but according to William Beiruk, *Bünjil* was called *Mamingata* (our father) before the white men came to Melbourne.

Before leaving this part of the subject, it is important to notice, in connection with the belief that the Great Spirit inhabits the land beyond the sky, what are the stories that are told as to his early connection with the tribes. *Bünjil*, it is said, left the earth with all his people, and went aloft in a furious wind, which tore the trees up by the roots. *Tharamülün*, after teaching his people the arts which they knew, and establishing their social ordinances, died, and his spirit (*Bulabong*) went up to the sky, where he has since lived with the ghosts. I have not heard any tales told about the ascension of *Brewin*, but the Kurnai have a favourite tale how the female duality *Bülüm-baukan*, and their son *Bülümtüt*, attempted to steal the fire of the Kurnai, and how, being prevented by the crow and the swamp-hawk, they climbed up to the sky by a thread made of the tail sinews of the Red Wallaby.<sup>1</sup>

The ascent of *Bünjil* in a furious wind has its analogy in the belief that *Brewin* travels in a whirlwind. To these beliefs is akin the belief of the Woi-worung that the wizards could send their deadly magical *yarük* (rock crystal) against a person they desired to kill in the form of a small whirlwind. Of the same kind is also the Murring belief that their wizards could blow the *krügülüng* (rock crystal) invisibly into their enemies. It seems to have been believed by all that these fatal magical powers were derived by their possessors from *Bünjil*, *Brewin*, *Tharamülün*, as the case might be, and further, that the wizards obtained their deadly powers when they ascended aloft to him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I might quote other analogous tales from other tribes as to ascents made by throwing up spears and by throwing up cords; but I desire in these notes to keep within the tribal boundaries which I have indicated. All these tales will find their place in the future.

<sup>2</sup> These beliefs as to the whirlwinds are probably very widespread. The Dieri believe that their Great Spirit, *Küchi*, travels in the form of a dust whirlwind. When I first saw some of these huge columns of red dust marching rapidly across the desert country west of Lake Eyre, and long before I knew of the Dieri beliefs, I was struck by their weird appearance. They then immediately recalled to my mind the story of the Jin who escaped as a column of vapour from a vase which a fisherman had brought up in his net. Mr. Frank

*The Wizards and Ghost-land.*—The connection of the wizard class with ghost-land is interesting. I have said that among the Kūlin of Wimmera River a man became a wizard who as a boy had seen his mother's ghost sitting at her grave. Such a wizard was believed to be able to "go up aloft," as my informant put it, and to bring back information from the dead. The "old law" which divided the Woi-worūng tribe into two classes, *Crow* and *Eaglehawk*, was, according to Beiruk, brought down from Būnjil by the wizards (*Wira-rap*). The Wolgul and Ngarego wizards could also, it was thought, ascend to the sky to interview *Tharamūlūn*, and to obtain their powers from him. Among the coast Murring the headman, in his character of wizard, was trained up when a boy by some other wizard. Such is reported to me as having been said of himself by the late head *gommera*, Waddyman of Browlee; but the magical powers, the terrible "poison magic," which these *gommeras* professed to have at command came to them from *Tharamūlūn* himself, with whom they professed to communicate.

Among the Kūrñai, however, the *Bira-ark*, who is indeed precisely the analogue of the *Wira-rap* of the Woi-worūng, appears, so far as my information extends, to have acquired his magical powers when arrived at maturity. One of my Kūrñai informants has told me the tale, current when he was a boy, of how a celebrated *Bira-ark* became one. It was said that he first dreamed for several consecutive nights that he was present at a Kangaroo Corroboree, and that in the form of a kangaroo he joined in the amusement; following this it was said that he heard continually the distant drumming of the ghosts at their celestial corroborees; finally, one night he was missed from the camp, having been taken up by the *Mrarts* and initiated into their mysteries. The following morning he was found near the camp lying in a state "like sleep," with an enormous log across his back. Being carried to his camp he remained for some time as if asleep, singing of that which he had seen among the *Mrarts*.<sup>1</sup>

James, now of the Victorian Police, and whom I first met with at Blanchewater, in the Dieri country, has told me how, in his knowledge, a young Dieri, having vowed to kill *Kūchi*, followed one of these dust whirlwinds for a long distance, throwing his weapons into it. He returned completely exhausted, saying that he had killed *Kūchi*, but that he felt very ill. He shortly after died, as it was believed, from the vengeance of *Kūchi*.

<sup>1</sup> The full meaning of the Kangaroo dream does not appear of itself. With the Kūrñai, to dream of kangaroos sitting round the sleeper was to receive a warning of impending danger. The Woi-worūng and the coast Murring held the same belief, but with the latter it was also the actual animal that gave warning to the man who bore its name. I learn that in this tribe each man's totem could give him warning of coming danger. My informant's totem name being Kanalgar (Kangaroo) he believed that kangaroos could warn him against foes. Among the Kūrñai and Woi-worūng the totem names have almost become extinct, but

This account, I think, raises a strong presumption that this man was subject to some form of brain disease. I have no doubt whatever, that although there was very great deceit practised, the *Bira-arks* were much self-deceived, just as many of the spiritists and their mediums of the present day really believe in the truth of their manifestations.

It seems, however, as I have already noted elsewhere, that the manner in which a man became a *Bira-ark* was generally believed to be that being found alone in the forest by the *Mrarts*, they took him up with them and taught him.

It is worthy of notice that in the tribes I am considering the wizards were believed to go up aloft by very similar means. Among the Kurnai the statement is always made that the wizard went up in company with the ghosts on something called a *marangrang*, and that he went through a hole in the sky, which was opened by a *Mrart* like a *gvera-eil* Kurnai, that is, like a headman.<sup>1</sup> This idea of a hole or door in the sky also appears in William Beiruk's account of the dream. I have not found any of the Kurnai who could give any clear account of what this *marangrang* was supposed to be like; the most common definition has been that it was "something like a rope," and that the *Bira-ark* and his attendant *Mrarts* went up on it, or holding on to it. Another statement was that it was like steps, for, said my informant, "it does not touch the ground; you can always hear the *Mrarts* jump down off it." My informant, Tūlaba,<sup>2</sup> spoke of the *marangrang* as a road (*wau-ūng*), along which the *Yambo* of the dead took its course to the sky.

The tales told of the *Bira-arks* in connection with the *marangrang* are very numerous; one may suffice here as an example. It was related of one *Būnjil Narran* (moon) that when flying across Lake Wellington, in company with the *Mrarts*, on a *marangrang*, he fell off, and would certainly have been drowned had not one of them fished him up with the hook of his throwing-stick and replaced him.

The *marangrang* may, I think, be assumed to have been, in the general opinion, not a rope extending down from the sky to the earth, such as appears to have been the idea of the celestial communication among the Woi-worūng, nor something like steps or a road, according to some of the Kurnai, but something movable. Quite recently a possible explanation has come from an unexpected quarter. I find that the *Turndun* is, among the Ngarego and Wolgal, not only called *Mūdthi* or *Mūdji*, but also

in the birds and animals which they believed could give them warning of danger I think we may suspect the totems which once existed.

<sup>1</sup> *Gvera-eil* = great, eminent.

<sup>2</sup> See "Kamilaroi and Kurnai," p. 191, *et infra*.

*Marengrang*.<sup>1</sup> Thus, although this word seems among the Kurnai to have lost what may have been its original meaning, as the sacred humming instrument, invented first by the Great Head Spirit, it has retained its place among the magical apparatus of the wizard, and as the means by which they, as also the dead, reach ghost-land.

Among the Omeo Theddora, the wizard was supposed to ascend to the sky by means of something "like a spider's web, which he blew out of his mouth."<sup>2</sup>

Among the coast Murring, the *gommera*, in his character of a wizard, was also supposed to mount up by a thread. The present headman of the Bega Murring, who is recognised as their *gommera*, explained to me when inquiring about this that "the old men now dead used to climb up to the sky at night by a thread" about the thickness of a grasshalm, which he picked up from the ground as an illustration.

Among the Kulin of the Wimmera River, and the Jūpagalk of the Avoca River, the wizards, according to my informant, used to "go up" at night for the purpose of bringing back information; but I have not yet learned how it was supposed that they ascended.

Generally speaking, the wizards were supposed to be able to ascend and descend in distant places, for the purpose of bringing away the apparatus by which some one of the distant tribe was bewitching one of the wizard's tribe to death (Woi-worung, Jūpagalk); or for the purpose of laying spells upon persons in a neighbouring tribe (Wolgal, Ngarego); or for the purpose of spying out the movement of an enemy, and thus being able to surprise them with an armed force (Theddora). Such a belief seems, indeed, a necessary and natural corollary to the belief that the wizard could ascend to the sky.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is an instance how words unexpectedly crop up in unlikely places. The word *mung*, which with the blacks of North-Eastern Victoria meant a magical substance, *e.g.*, rock crystal, reappears in a Carpentaria tribe as *mungern* (wizard). Kurnai, which in Gippsland is "man" as restricted to the Gippsland tribe, appears with a similar restricted meaning in the great group of allied tribes located on the deltas of the Barcoo and Diamantina Rivers. Many other instances might be quoted, but no one probably doubts the unity of the Australian languages.

<sup>2</sup> As told to Mr. J. Buntine, J.P., of Toongabbie, by Theddora Johnny, one of the Omeo tribe, who was employed as a stockman. This statement was made as to a headman, Metoko, whose name is now remembered by surviving Maneroo and Gippsland blackfellows as that of a powerful wizard. Mr. Buntine lived at Omeo, shortly after the country was first settled.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. A. L. P. Cameron, of Muluru, New South Wales, tells me of the Ta-ta-thi tribe of Moulamein, that "they believe the sky to be a solid vault, up to which a wizard once ascended, and was let in through a window by a *goomatch* (ghost). Some of the doctors, but not all, obtained the power of ascending by chewing a piece of skin which had been cut off the abdomen of a dead woman, whose ghost then carried him up."



It is impossible not to be struck with the resemblance in all their beliefs to accounts which have been handed down by the records of ancient people, and to beliefs still existing in the folklore of Europe. The solid vault of heaven finds innumerable parallels everywhere as to its openings into the spirit world beyond. The ascent of mere mortals, or of persons of some class claiming supernatural powers and attributes, is also paralleled in all times and places.

Such beliefs have been common to both Aryan and Semitic peoples. The Australian beliefs which I have now recorded lead to the suspicion that all similar beliefs may have had an origin such as theirs, and that in the legends of peoples we may recognise the natural development of such primitive ideas.

The significance of these Australian beliefs seems to me to be heightened when we reflect that in them we may have conceptions formed by primitive savage man, striving to explain to himself natural phenomena of which he became aware within and without himself, and that these beliefs have then been handed down to us by tribes which for ages have been cut off from contact with more rapidly advancing races; or it may be that we have here the independent origin of ideas which seem to me to be capable, under favourable circumstances, of developing into as complete religious systems as the world has ever seen. In either case the bearing of the evidence cannot, I think, be over-rated.

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### SPECIAL EXTRA MEETING.

JUNE 19TH, 1883.

[*Held by invitation of Mr. C. Ribeiro, at the Piccadilly Hall, S.W.*]

HYDE CLARKE, Esq., *Vice-President, in the Chair.*

The Members had an opportunity of examining the large collection of objects of ethnological interest obtained by Mr. Ribeiro in Brazil.

Mr. RIBEIRO exhibited the five Botocudo Indians (two males and three females) which he had brought to this country.

Mr. HYDE CLARKE addressed Mr. Ribeiro in Portuguese, and conveyed to him the thanks of the Institute for the permission to examine a collection truly anthropological in its character. This