

XI 1E

CORROBOREES, GAMES, etc.

Very early MSS.

Derived from various sources

Subject to correction

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The Rev. Dr. Fraser gives a definition of the word "corroboree" which may be here quoted. "Karabori is an aboriginal name for those dances which our natives often have in the forests at night. Hitherto the name has been written 'corroboree', but etymologically it should be 'karabari' for it comes from the same root as 'karaji', a wizard or medicine man, and 'bari' is a common formative in the native languages." This word however is not used by the W.A. S. aborigines. Moore makes no mention of the word "corroboree" in his dictionary. He states that the name yallor is given to the native dance by the northern men, kaggarak being the name applied by the southern tribes, D-yoolga by the eastern tribes, wirbe the southeastern, yen-ma the North-east and east, also Nilge and Yuyltunmitch by the natives of King George's Sound.

Grey gives the word "kor-ro-bo-ree", but he also states that yal-lore was the name of the native dance at Perth, kag-a-ruk a native dance (no locality given), yuyl-toonmitch the King George's Sound name for the dance - none of the other names mentioned by Moore are alluded to by Grey.

Amongst the various names given by the West Australian natives to what may be called their national dances are the following culled from the vocabularies compiled by residents of the various districts named :-

<u>Corroboree</u>	<u>District</u>
Bierra-bierra	Gascoyne
Corroboree (?)	Roebourne
Can-el-goo	Northampton
Yin-ma - pun-yer-oo	Pilbara
Kanna	Guildford
Beera-beera	York (Durlacher)
Dundarai	York (Monger)

The word "corroboree" is not used amongst the West Australians.

Where it is to be found, it has been imported by the white settlers, and adopted by the natives. The equivalent of "dance" or "dancing" in the South is kē'ning, with certain modifications in spelling, There are various kinds of dances, the jalgoo kening (where promiscuous intercourse is the chief feature), yabaroo kening (northern dance), kakara kening (eastern dance), wanna wa kening (same as jalgoo), etc. The northern term for "dance" has been variously rendered, and it is probable that the name of a particular dance is given, not the equivalent for the word "dance". J.O. Brown of Roebourne gives the name as koon'ang'oo and S.H. Meares of Tambrey, Tableland district, as "banyalgoo" (jalgoo?) The Gascoyne word is "kan'neea" or an'neea, the Murchison "yal-ligo" (jalgoo?), also kē'nal-la, Ashburton, Tchallerer (jalgoo?), West Kimberley, Tcharraree (jalgoo?) Sunday Island "boorboor" (beera beera?), Jas. Young of Roebourne gives "gumung" and F.A. Wedge, Port Hedland, "yin'ma" (a special dance?). The jalgoo came down from the north.

Wild Man Corroboree

"The preparations for this remarkable corroboree," according to Mr. C.A. Paterson, an old resident of W.A., often "require a whole fortnight and is done in the most secret manner. None of the old men or any of the women are supposed to see those engaged in the preparation during this time, and should a woman accidentally or designedly come amongst them, she is ravished by all the men in the most unmerciful manner. They get up for this corroboree consists of a complete inclosure of the body in small branches and twigs, so that not a single portion of any of the limbs remains visible, and even their form is hidden. To accomplish this the blackfellows use a large quantity of chuat (string made of human or opossum hair) which is wound round the head and body in all directions, behind which the twigs are pushed and carefully arranged, so that the string is completely concealed. (Incorrect. Manja bom and moolyeet or beedawong corroboree, description incorrect. The following paragraph not confirmed by any native of southern districts.)

Like every other masquerade, these corroborees aim at giving surprise, and exciting admiration and as the blacks are very vain,

and ambitious, not to be outdone, they bestow the greatest care upon these decorations, that they may be spoken of for a long time. The dance and show last only from ten to fifteen minutes, and then the covering comes down that has taken probably as many days of mysterious preparation, and is entirely discarded."

The tribes practising this ceremony inhabit the coastal districts from Geraldton to Albany and those territories approaching them.

Corroborees, Games, Songs, Mimicry, etc.

The W.A. aborigines are very fond of music and dancing, their repertoire in these accomplishments being both extensive and varied. War dances before and after a battle; initiation dances; dances which are only performed by women; totem dances in which the habits, manners, methods of hunting etc. of the animal or bird which is the symbol of their tribe are faithfully imitated; dances of propitiation to the evil spirit, and many other kinds are indulged in as occasion offers, and entered into with a zest not to be equalled in any European ballroom.

Little was known of many of these mystic dances or of their signification until the publication of Messrs. Spencer and Gillen's work on the Aborigines of the interior, where the patient investigation on the part of the joint authors who studied the native in his own territory, resulted in the accumulation of a mass of information of considerable interest to ethnologists and anthropologists relative to the habits and customs of the natives, but having more particular reference to their symbolic dances and the objects they represent.

Many of the native dances and the songs accompanying them have been carried from one end of the continent to the other, passing through the various tribes en route, receiving additions or having various portions deleted on the way, but still retaining the essentials which made them of sufficient importance to be reproduced throughout the continent. Neither the words nor the principal actions of many of these corroborees are understood by the natives but every detail in their performance is faithfully

adhered to. Three elements are always represented at these corroborees, music, dancing and dramatic representation, constituting a point of resemblance between the native entertainments and European opera. There is no serious business in life amongst the W.A. natives in which music has not its part, mourning, rejoicing, inciting to battle - on all occasions music is the medium of expression of their feelings.

Grey states (Journal, II, 255) that the rules of etiquette are strictly observed at the corroborees; the females sit in a group apart, generally behind the old men; the performers are on the side of the fire opposite to them; in one or two dances, the women take a part in the song, but they never dance themselves, nor are the young men allowed to approach them. It is all fair for the dancers to do their utmost, by the arrangement of paint and ornaments, to shew off their personal attractions....but they are permitted to hold no converse whatever with any but their mothers and sisters." (To be corrected.)

In some parts of the South the women sit down in front of the performers, either irregularly, in a line, or a semi circle, folded up their skin cloaks into a hard ball, and then beat them upon their laps with the palm of their hand, accompanying the noise thus produced with their voices. It is surprising to see the perfect time that is kept in this way, and the admirable manner in which the motions of the dancers accord with the music. There is no confusion, irregularity or mistake. Each person is strictly conversant with his part; and all exhibit a degree of elasticity and gracefulness in their movements which in some of the dances is very striking and beautiful."

Eyre's Disc. II, 231

Eyre in contradistinction to Grey states that in some of the dances women are allowed to take a part; but they have dances of their own in which the men do not join.

Each tribe has its own traditional dances in which the figures and music exclusively belong to it; the personal decorations vary, also the weapons and the manner of using them. A certain similarity however, prevails in the dances of all the Australian natives, in the colour used for painting; the down and feathers, the arrangement of green boughs etc. the distinctive differences of the tribes

being in the patterns on the body and other decorations of the person.

The women at almost all times furnish the music - vocal and instrumental, for these dances. In the southwest they beat upon their kyleys and in the Norwest they either furnish the music with a curious kind of hand clapping or else they beat their kyleys in unison on the hard surface of the ground. Sometimes an old man will act as leader, setting the time and tune for the females, but in general the women of the party "lead off" in the music.

Their music, according to European ideas, has not much to commend it, except the perfect time kept which would delight the soul of a conductor, but to the natives themselves the rude music evolved from the clapping of hands, the beating of the digging stick on the spearthrower, or the play of the closed fists upon the stretched opossum or kangaroo skin represents the very perfection of art. The chants from fifty throats, the tapping of a hundred sticks on the ground, the rhythmic sound of the feet as they beat the earth, all in the most perfect unison with each other exhibit a barbaric beauty, which, combined with the surrounding scenery, appeals strongly to the imagination of the intelligent European.

According to Scott Nind (Journal Geog. Soc. I, P. 31), the dances of the natives of King George's Sound were very varied. "They usually strip themselves entirely. The face was painted red; and on the arms and body were various figures painted with a white colour. White pigment is usually an emblem of mourning, but it is used in the dances, from its being the most conspicuous colour at night. Their mulgarradocks (doctors) and old men never dance. A fire is kindled on a clear spot, behind which is seated an old man, and in front the dance is performed, as if towards him. They keep the same step, which is varied from time to time; sometimes stooping and grunting, and moving their heads sideways in most grotesque attitudes. Their dances vary, and are in some instances intended to represent the chase and killing of animals.... Whilst they are dancing they have green boughs in their hands, which they in turn advance and deposit with the old man behind the fire. At some of their dances they have their spears, and at a

certain part represent killing one of their party; after which the spears are, like the green boughs, delivered to the old man who the whole time is seated on the ground, looking very serious and turning his head about as if to inspect and give directions to the dancers, and pulling or stroking his beard with either hand alternately..... I do not think the women dance with the men, nor am I certain that they ever dance, although some of the natives have informed me they do at their own fires.... Each man repeats at every jump the words wow wow, the meaning of which I cannot explain. When they drive game from a covert with sticks and a noise they call it wow-e-nia-tur, the word wow being also then used....Their dances only take place when many are congregated together and at peace."

The "Perth Gazette" of March 16th, 1833, contains an interesting account of a corroboree held in Perth. "At the solicitation of Yagan who had not been present at the celebration of this native festival on previous occasions, Captain Ellis was induced to allow the Swan River and the King George's men to hold a corrobory in Mr. Purkes's yard on Wednesday evening last, which attracted an overflowing audience. About dusk the two tribes assembled and commenced their preparations by chalking each other's breasts in tasteful devices, resembling the spangled decorations of the riders at Astley's which ceremony was accompanied by a hurdy-gurdy chant chorused by the party. They appeared highly flattered by the interest the audience took in their manœuvres, and preparatory to the entertainment, stalked to and through, rehearsing their chants and exercising their singular attributes, with all the self complacency of our more cultivated artists.... The representation of killing the kangaroo, the one performer assuming the character of Huntsman, the other the kangaroo, was striking from its fidelity, indeed was a fine specimen of acting; but the necromantic dances, as they were termed, could only gratify the initiated, of whom we believe there were but few present. We are of opinion it would require some stretch of imagination to construe the knocking of noses together, dancing on their knees, and pulling each other's legs, into necromancy, however, we yield

to those whose experience and knowledge of their habits has led them to draw this conclusion....His Honor the Lieutenant Governor honored the natives with his presence....The figures of most of the natives of this part of the country displayed to advantage in this muscular exercise, would have formed a fine study for the artist. The King George's Sound men are far inferior to them, both in person, ingenuity and activity, in their native sports. Yagan was master of the ceremonies and acquitted himself with infinite dignity and grace."

Dr. Wilson furnishes an account of a dance held by the natives of King George's Sound on the occasion of the departure of Lieutenant Sleeman. (Wilson's Voyages, P. 274.)

"As soon as it became dark, a large fire was kindled in the centre of the camp and the ball commenced....There was not that elegance of gesture which we witnessed among the aborigines of Raffles Bay, but there was more meaning in the dance, although we could not make it out. They began by marching slowly in a circle round the fire, gradually accelerating their pace; and then in turns they placed their spears at the feet of one of their party who stood outside the ring viewing, but without taking any part in the ceremony; then they danced with might and main, until nearly exhausted, when they retired to supper..."

It is when a large gathering of various tribes takes place that the most interesting dances are performed. Each tribe does its utmost to rival its neighbours in the performance of some special dance learned for the occasion and the stimulus which this rivalry excites is a great incentive to extra exertion.

Eyre states that "the natives have not any war dance, properly so called, though sometimes they are decorated in all the pomp and circumstance of war. Being excellent mimics, they mimic in many of their dances the habits and movements of animals. They also represent the mode of hunting, fighting, love making etc. New figures and songs are constantly introduced, and are as much applauded and encored as more refined productions of a similar kind in civilised communities, being sometimes passed from tribe to tribe for a considerable distance. I

have often seen dances performed to songs with which I was acquainted, and which I knew to belong to distant parts of the country where a different dialect was spoken, and which consequently could not be understood where I heard them. Many of the natives cannot even give an interpretation of the songs of their own districts."

(Catlin in his work on the North American Indians, vol. I, p. 126, says, "Not one in ten of the young men who are dancing and singing it, know the meaning of the song they are chaunting over." Dieffenboch speaks similarly of some of the New Zealand native songs. vol. II, p. 57.)

In many of the figures in the dances which take place at the great tribal gatherings, weapons are carried, and Eyre who witnessed many of these assemblies says that "it is amazing to behold the facility and skill with which they form in close array, spread into open ranks, change places, and thread through the mazes of the dance, without ever deranging their plans, or coming in contact with each other. The tribes who are not engaged in dancing are seated in a large semicircle as spectators, occasionally giving a rapturous exclamation of delight, as any part of the performance is well gone through or any remarkable feat of activity exhibited..... "On one occasion," continues Eyre, "I saw five tribes met together and the evening was of course spent in dancing. Each tribe danced in turn about forty being engaged at once, besides sixteen females, eight of whom were at each corner of the male performers. The men were naked, painted in various devices with red and white, and had their heads adorned with feathers. The women wore their opossum cloaks, and had bands of white down round their foreheads, with the long feathers of the cockatoo sticking up in front like horns. In the dance the men and women did not intermingle, but the two sets of women who were dancing at the corners of the line occasionally changed places with each other, passing in this transit at the back of the men. All sing, and the men beat time upon their smaller weapons whilst dancing, the whole making up a wild and piercing noise, most deafening and ungrateful to the ears..... In some of the dances the music varies rapidly from slow to quick, and the

See Illus.
P. 229, II
Eyre

marginal note - where held?

movements alter accordingly. In some they are altogether measured and monotonous, in others lively and quick, keeping the performers almost constantly at a double quick march, moving in advance and retreat, crossing past or threading through the ranks, and using a kind of motion with the feet in unison with the music, that bears a strong resemblance to the European mode of dancing. At particular points the figures terminate by some simultaneous motion of the whole performers, accompanied by a deep, guttural "waugh", uttered by all together; at others by the actors closing in a dense circle, and raising and pointing their weapons upwards with the same exclamation. (Catlin, vol. II, p. 136, says that the sound appears to be common among the North American Indians, and to be used in the same manner.)

In another dance, in which women are the chief performers, their bodies are painted with white streaks and their hair adorned with cockatoo feathers. They carry large sticks in their hands, and place themselves in a row in front, whilst the men with their spears stand in a line behind them. They then all commence their movements, but without intermingling, the males and females dancing by themselves.

Occasionally dances take place during the day time. Eyre S.A. witnessed one of these which took place during the visit of some strange tribes to the locality. "The Moerunde natives were seated upon the brow of a sandbank; the strangers, consisting of two tribes, down in a hollow a little way off, among a few bushes. When ready, they advanced in a line towards the others, dancing and singing, being painted and decorated as usual, some having tufts of feathers placed upon their heads like cockades and others carrying them in their hands tied to short sticks. Nearly all the males carried bunches of green boughs, which they waved and shook to the time of the song. The women were also painted, and danced in a line with the men, those of each tribe stationing themselves at opposite ends of the line. Dancing for a while, they retired again towards the hollow, and after a short interval advanced as before, but with a person in the centre carrying a curious rude looking figure, raised up in the air. This singular object consisted of a large bundle of grass and reeds bound together,

enveloped in a kangaroo skin, with the flesh side outwards, and painted all over in small white circles. From the top of this projected a thin stick, with a large tuft of feathers at the end to represent the head, and sticks were stuck out laterally from the sides for the arms, terminating in tufts of feathers stained red to represent the hands. From the front a small stick about six inches long was projected, ending with a thick knob, formed of grass, around which a piece of old cloth was tied. This was painted white and represented the navel. The figure was about eight feet long and was evidently intended to symbolise a man. It was kept in its elevated position by the person who carried it, and who advanced and retired with the movements of the dancers. The position of the latter was alternately erect and crouching, whilst they sang and beat time with the green boughs. Sometimes they stretched out their right arms simultaneously, and at other times their left, apparently for the purpose of marking the time at particular parts of the song. After dancing for a while in this way they again retired to the hollow, and for a few moments there was another pause; after which they again advanced as before, but without the image. In the place of this two standards were exhibited, made of poles, about twelve feet long, and borne by two persons. These were perfectly straight, and for the first eight feet free from boughs; above this nine branches were left upon each pole, having at their ends each a bunch of feathers of the hawk or owl. On the top of one of the standards was a bunch of emu feathers. The branches were stripped of all their smaller twigs and leaves, and of their bark. They were painted white, and wound round with the white down of the black swan, twisted into a rope. This also extended for a considerable distance down the pole, below the undermost branch.

Having again retired towards the hollow, they remained there for a few minutes and then advanced for the third time. On this occasion, however, instead of the image or standards, they all carried their spears. After dancing with these for some time, they went forward towards the Moorunde natives, who sprang upon their feet, and seizing their weapons, speared two or three of

See Illus.
Eyre
II, 238

the strangers in the shoulder and all was over....This dance took place between nine and ten in the morning." Eyre believed these dances and the image and the standards, had some connection with their superstitions, and that the figure was regarded in the light of a charm.

Curr was of opinion that no two tribes joined in performing a corroboree, though each would go through the same corroboree separately. Eyre's account of the series of dances mentioned above does not agree with Curr's statement. It is however noticeable amongst a large gathering of natives on the occasion of some tribal ceremony that each tribe performs its corroboree by itself, and a great rivalry always existing as to which tribe will give the best interpretation of the dance. Sometimes the corroborees act as a medium of reconciliation between tribes who were previously at war with each other. On the other hand, a friendly invitation to a dance by no means ensures that the affair will terminate amicably. Nevertheless the corroborees have been instrumental in keeping up a certain communication between the neighboring tribes, which otherwise would not take place and if the dance is wound up with a "free fight", such a termination is not unknown even in Ireland. (To be corrected or deleted :-)

Mr. E.S. Parker in his "Aborigines of Australia" (1854) says he has witnessed ceremonies having resemblance to an act of worship, when the blacks have assembled to propitiate mind, an evil spirit, whose sole business it was to destroy. They dwelt on this - the idea of a powerful and destructive spirit - with awe and dread. Mindi they believed, caused death, and they used certain prescribed ceremonies in order to appease his anger and to avert death and other calamities from themselves, and to excite him to exercise his power for the injury or destruction of their enemies. "Rude images, consisting of one large and two small figures, cut in bark and painted, were set up in a secluded spot; the place was strictly tabooed; the men, and afterwards the women, dressed in boughs, and having each a small wand with a tuft of feathers tied on it, were made to dance in single file, and in a very sinuous course, towards the spot, and after going round it several times,

to approach the main figure, and touch it reverentially with the wand. I believe this to be a relic of the ophielatria or serpent worship of India."

A dance, supposed to symbolise the revival of the soul after death, is described by Mr. Parker who witnessed the ceremony. It was conducted by an old man, who stated that it was practised by the people of the North West amongst whom he had learned it. "Holding boughs in each hand, which were waved in unison alternately over each shoulder, and dancing for some time in lines and semicircles, at length they gradually gathered into a compact circular body; then slowly sinking on the ground and burying their heads under the boughs, they represented, according to the statement of the old native, who was master of the ceremonies, the approach of death and in the perfectly still and motionless posture they maintained for some time the state of death itself. Then the old man, breaking suddenly into a new dance and waving furiously his boughs over the prostrate mass, gave them the word; and, suddenly springing to their feet, they joined him in his rejoicings. This was explained to me as intended to represent the revival of the soul after death."

(A few pages missing here.)

are held one in each hand and beaten together like the rattling of bones in a christy minstrel performance, excellent time being kept. When the song starts the men are about twenty feet away. The M.C. rushes out to the front followed by the whole company in single file, who then dance into a square. At times they are four deep and at others eight and they are clever in forming squares and changing into lines so readily. They have no partners. Each raises his foot at the same moment about two feet high and brings it down with great force. The soil is usually soft and the thud caused by so many feet striking the earth at the same time can be heard some distance away. The women join in the dance on the outer edge, but they do not lift their feet as the men do, keeping time by gliding from right to left, their arms swinging to time also. The women do not dress for the occasion. At the close of the dance the men shake their bodies as though shivering with extreme cold,

and whoever can thus rid himself of the most feathers is considered the best dancer."

Note : See Eyre 's description of the Moorundi dance on page 9.

The names of the various corroborees danced by the Guildford natives are thus given by Jubyche. Bee-bal, kog-ga-rah (or ka-ka-rah), jul-gyche, mirdar, welp (or werp), moor-ur-dung. Their numerous songs and dances have been obtained from Bunbury, Northam, Roebourne, Kimberley, Nor'West and Albany.

Captain Irwin who was Acting Governor of this State in 1835 draws reference to the talent for mimicry possessed by the natives. W.A. in "They have...been seen imitating the walk and gesture of 1835, P. 24 a number of Europeans, some of whom they had but occasionally met, with such exactness that the standers-by were instantly enabled to name the persons intended. This facility of imitation renders their pantomimic dances which they delight in, lively pictures of some of their pursuits.....Their representation of killing the kangaroo is peculiarly striking. Two are selected out of the circle to represent the hunter and the kangaroo. One assumes the attitude of the animal when grazing, and exhibits the cautious timidity natural to it, pausing from time to time, rising upon end, looking about and anxiously listening as it were, to ascertain whether an enemy be nigh. The hunter, approaching against the wind, with extreme caution steals on his prey; and, after frequent change of his position retreating or throwing himself on the ground, the scene at length closes with the triumph of the hunter, on his discharging the spear, which is supposed to pierce the animal."

Nathaniel Ogle, F.G.S. says, "the natives evince an ear for Ogle's W.A. music and are fond of dancing. The only attempt P. 61-62 at a musical instrument yet seen among them, is a kind of drum, made of kangaroo skin stretched over a bundle, and beaten with the fists of the women and children; they strike in correct time, and sing simultaneously and in a monotonous kind of chant. To this music the men and boys dance, singing at the same time. This dance is evidently expressive of their gallantry and readiness to defend the weaker sex. They retreat together in the

exact step, then turn and give on tip-toe a curious agitation to the legs, which are widely distended; suddenly they rush towards the women, raising their voices, extending their arms, and placing themselves in a defensive attitude."

The elaborately carved "yilbars" or bullroarers, play an important part in the ceremonies of the Murchison natives during their initiation rites and the corroborees attendant thereon. These bullroarers are long flat pieces of wood carved, and tapering at either end, varying in length from twelve to twenty two inches. A hole is pierced in one end of the instrument through which a string of kangaroo hide or human hair is passed, and then it is twirled violently round making the curious sound which has obtained for it its name of "bullroarer". The women are kept strictly away from all these ceremonies in which the bullroarer or yilbar (as it is called in the Murchison district) is used, death being the penalty for transgression of this law. Helms states that "the Helms' women must not even look upon one of the yilbar, Anthropology 285 for they would certainly be killed if they were found to have seen one. If accidentally a woman should get sight of one, she would probably pine to death because she has been led to believe that her doom is sealed and superstition is so deeply rooted in her that she would most likely succumb to what she thinks is her unavoidable fate."

Helms furnishes an anecdote illustrative of the superstitious fears of the native women respecting the bullroarer, and the desire of the men to keep that superstition alive. "The wall of one of Ibid the rooms at the station (Annean) was decorated with a 286 number of native weapons and implements and among the latter several yilbars. This was well known by the station blacks and soon after our arrival "Jack" took Mr. Cruikshank mysteriously aside to say something to him, which turned out to be a request that the new arrivals be warned not to get the yilbars out and show them to the women. A few days later I asked "Jinny" when she was sweeping the verandah, to come into the room, but she would not, although I offered her tobacco, which would make her do almost anything else; and when I went towards her and caught her by the hand, she shrew her broom down and ran away..... Both

these blacks had lived for several years at the station, and had been a good deal enlightened, and had altered considerably from their original ways, but so far the contact with civilisation had not produced the least effect towards removing this superstition."

Swan

In the "frog" dance, all the actions and movements of the frog are imitated with the greatest accuracy, so also in the "emu" dance. But whether it is a corroboree descriptive of a kangaroo hunt, or whatever other animal may be represented on the aboriginal stage, the natives furnish the most exact representation of the movements habits and mode of hunting the one chosen for the pantomimic performance. And in the matter of scenery, in the dense forest, upon the edge of which they have, in a manner erected their stage, in the brilliant moon, and in the weird lights and shadows thrown over the players and spectators by the light of the huge central fire together with the fantastically painted forms of the performers, no transformation scene could heighten the effect, the greatest scenic artist could not add one feature that would enhance a scene so entirely harmonious in its surroundings with the character of the play delineated.

Ashburton

Mr. Durlacher who states that he has been an eye witness of many tribal fights and also of a number of native dances, gives a close description of the latter. "When a dance is to come off the natives are kept quite busy for a day or two beforehand, making preparations for the event, which means collecting an extra supply of food, so that they may not run short of provisions while the ceremony is going on, so seeds, roots and meats are procured, white and red ochre is sought for, spears are sharpened and shields are freshly painted, green wands are sought for and when found are cut into right lengths, bark stripped down and the wood shaved. (Illustrated P. 46 MSS.) Green wood is shaved into strips for ornamental head gear; eagle, emu and cockatoo feathers are brought out to be worn as plumes on the arms and head, the emu feathers are also joined together in bunches by means of spinifex gum and worn as appendages on the front and back of the body, the downy

underfeathers of the white cockatoo, or any small soft white feathers are used for sticking on their bodies in all sorts of artistic forms to suit the taste of the wearer; for the dancing, a flat and if possible, a fairly soft piece of ground is chosen, as hard ground generally bruises the dancers' feet as they stamp and bound a great deal when moving to the music; so when a suitable spot is procured it is cleared of all sticks and stones and carefully smoothed over with the hands, the shape of the dancing ground as a rule is almost circular, After this part of the work is finished a large heap of firewood is piled at the end of the space where the dancers perform, and when the time arrives for the dancing to commence the woodpile is lighted which is a signal for the dancers to be in readiness, then the band which generally consists of two or three old men and a number of women and children, strikes up the music, (singing is called tabbee-tabbee) by clapping boomerangs, scraping meeros and rattling sticks together, also singing at the same time, and presently a strange figure in black and white comes bounding out of the darkness, leaps over the fire, and takes his station in front of the band, then another dancer comes springing along, goes through the same performance as the first arrival, and is soon followed by another, and this is carried on until the last man has taken his place, then the dancing commences in real earnest, the performers generally dancing first, in a single line, then forming a double at intervals, the rear line passing to the front and the front ranks stepping to the rear, then a half circle is formed and so on, going through various figures; sometimes when dancing they hold shaved ornamental green wands in each hand, at other times they have shields, and the shield dance is certainly the most attractive to look at, as by firelight with a dark background the black and white on the natives' bodies seem to blend harmoniously with the red and white streaked faces of their wooden shields, the whole scene being as weird and wild as a person could wish to look at. There are a number of different styles of dancing amongst the various tribes and occasionally the women join in the dance, but do not move vigorously like the men, but with a sort of shuffle and dance in a circle around the male performers, holding their fighting sticks

at arms length above their heads, and following one another in single file. Their war dance which is generally performed in broad daylight seems to be a serious affair for those who take part in it, the warriors deck themselves with eagle plumes, which are worn as a headdress and also fastened in bunches on each arm near the shoulder, their faces and bodies are painted with red and black pigments and their fighting shields are streaked on the face with broad red and white zigzag lines, and before the dance commences there is a great deal of wailing and crying by the women, then the men who take part in the dance draw themselves up in a single line with their shields held in front of them and their spears which are fitted into their meeros are held perpendicularly; then a very old woman comes running along with a long fighting stick held with both hands high above the head, and as she dances up and down in front of the line of braves, she works herself up into a violent frenzy, words and cries coming from her mouth at lightning speed, every muscle in her old body quivers, foam comes from her lips and at intervals she beats the ground violently, with her long fighting staff, the warriors looking on at this with an apparently stolid indifference, but when her tirade is ended, a sudden change comes over them, their spears being brought down suddenly to a throwing position, and made to quiver as though in the act of being thrown. Shields are held on guard, and the dance commences at the same time, the dancing action being springing first off one foot and then off the other, and this movement seems to work off their indifference, as the dance now grows fast and furious, and real black demons they look in their striking war paint and plumes, their yellow eyeballs rolling in their sockets and their bodies quivering with the strain and excitement of the dance."

Portion missing

~~applying to the different divisions of a tribe for which native laws are laid down to prevent intermarriage, but now as we move along, the natives seem to be in a peaceful joyous mood, singing, shouting, talking and of course the usual accompaniment of crying from the old women and as we pass each family group we are favoured with the usual native greeting, "Marra joonar marra joonar".....~~

After one of these native dances a fight generally takes place. Mr. Durlacher's description of one of these fights is increased in interest on account of the members of the four chief tribes of the Nor'West being engaged in it, the names of the various tribes with slight modifications being the same as those given by Forrest, Fison and Howitt, Withnell, Mathews, and several others who have studied the tribal distinctions of the W.A. natives. "Let me lead you," says Mr. Durlacher, "into a native camp, the night after the dance, the camp fires are twinkling all around us and ^{as} we pass along you will notice a big marloo containing a family division of Kymarras, and perhaps further on a gathering of Palyerrees, or perhaps some boorongs or bannikers, these names applying to the different divisions of a tribe for which the native laws are laid down to prevent intermarriage, but now as we move along, the natives seem to be in a peaceful joyous mood, singing, shouting, talking, and of course the usual accompaniment of crying from the old women and as we pass each family group we are favoured with the usual native greeting, "Marra jooanar, marra jooanar,".....as we return the greeting our attention is suddenly arrested by seeing fire sticks flung high into the darkness sending out showers of sparks in all directions, and at the same time we notice one flung from out of the darkness straight into a group of natives, striking the body of one of the men with a dull thud causing sparks to fly around him, and at the same time scattering the group in all directions, in two seconds there are "wigs on the green", the injured warrior has seized his weapons and springs out into the open trailing two or three long spears behind him, and holding his meero and shield grasped in one hand, his other holding the spears; watch him as he strides up and down swelling with offended dignity and bellowing out defiance at his adversary who is now rushing up and down in the same fashion, but gradually edging up to his foe and flinging back insult for insult, the women are meanwhile running up and down between the would-be combatants, holding their fighting sticks at arms length over their heads and jabbering at the top of their voices, the other natives standing around with spears shipped ready to take sides if needful, but presently one of the warriors who has been worked up to madness

by the taunts of the other man, suddenly with a roar of rage flings the women aside and quick as lightning launches his spear at his adversary who, being on the alert, receives the spear full on the face of his shield, and with a supple movement of his wrist causes it to glance off and fall harmlessly to the ground, but immediately retaliates by launching his spear in return which will be guarded off as the other has been and occasionally it will happen that having thrown all their spears without much injury on either side, they will close and belabour each other with their shields or else with their wokabullas (fighting clubs) until one gives in, or both are exhausted. Immediately one is beaten or badly wounded, the women start to howl and wail which is a sure sign that the fight is entirely ended as far as the men are concerned, though it generally happens that the women take up the quarrel and fight viciously with their sticks, the result being cracked heads and smashed fingers, their fingers being often broken while warding off blows from their head."

The Nor' West spears being generally long and heavy the natives do not throw them but stand up close to each other and using their weapons as lances endeavour to impale each other without loosening their hold and grasping their spears almost in the middle so that when a native manages to break through his adversary's guard he generally drives his spear home. Mr. Durlacher says that in a family fight the natives seldom attempt to spear each other above the thigh; this seems to be an established custom amongst them, though it occasionally happens that a hot blooded native flings his spear indiscriminately amongst his people resulting occasionally in fatally wounding one of them, and of being killed himself at some future date by avenging relatives.

Sometimes a fight is started by a native throwing a boomerang with great force into a crowd of other natives, and it is wonderful to note the skilful manner in which they shield themselves from this dangerous weapon of warfare, sometimes by receiving it on their shields, and by a quick wrist movement, causing it to fly straight above their heads and after circling in the air falling harmlessly to the ground. At other times a shield will be struck full on the face smashing it to bits and then sometimes a man gets

hit, the result being an ugly ragged wound, if struck with the full force of the impetus, and generally when the quarrel is started in this fashion there is a big fight and a number are wounded, sometimes one is killed; but these quarrels as a rule only occur when rival tribes are fighting with each other, and are nearly always fought out in broad daylight, for fear of treachery."

Mrs. Millett mentions (An Australian Parsonage, p. 230) the "most disturbing and oft recurring hubbub kept up all night by the whole company who beat and stamped upon the ground in unison producing an amount of noise that was perfectly astounding, their bare feet and the hardness of the soil being taken into consideration."

Mrs. Millett also states that two or three natives at different times gave some obscure information relative to a yearly feast held in honour of the evil spirit and called on that account the "jingy corroboree", the description of the natives tallying with a similar custom prevalent in the Eastern colonies.

A description of a Native Ball written by the late Rev. Dr. Fraser (Aborigines, 65-6) gives a general idea of the important corroborees held throughout Australia. Besides the music supplied by the women from their opossum skin "drums", digging sticks and kyleys, Dr. Fraser says another adjunct is the painted skins of the bands of performers and the ornaments they wear. Instead of the rouge box and the puff powder as a preparation for the ball, To be every aboriginal family has a supply of pipeclay and corrected or ruddle (red oxide of iron). These, if not to be had deleted in the district, are procured at the trading fairs and otherwise, by barter. The women delight in adorning their husbands with these for the dance and the men paint each other with stripes of white on the ribs and chest and down the legs, and red and white on the face and body, until, when they come forth and sit themselves in readiness to begin they look like a band of ghostly skeletons....All, both men and women, put on a frontlet or headband of native material and in it are stuck, just on the

right side of the forehead plumes of swans feathers. Necklaces... and armlets are worn; and hanging down behind from the belt is something that looks like a cock's tail. In the nose is the usual nose stick; tied to the ankles are bunches of foliage which, in the dance, make a curious rustling noise, reminding one of the jingle made by the ankle ornaments of some North American Indian tribes in their dances. A big fire is kept burning while the dance is going on, and the fitful glare of the light on the naked and ghastly bodies of the performers, the silence of the forests in the darkness all around, the bare trunks of the huge gum trees - all combine to make a weirdly scene to the beholder. The "karabori" dances are kept up till the dawn of day, and it is amazing to see the vigour and the energy which even the old men display in twisting their bodies and stamping and turning to one side and the other, every movement being made by all in unison, and as mechanically as if all were but the united portions of one machine. In an all night long "karabori" there are acts and interludes. The acts may be of various kinds, representations of the stalking and capture of an emu, the hunting of kangaroos, and other sylvan sports.....The interludes consist of the merrymaking of two or three clowns, who are painted and dressed up in a peculiar way for the occasion."

Mrs. Millet tells an amusing story (An Australian Parsonage, 82-3) of a native man and woman whom she commissioned to carry a letter to a parishioner who lived eleven miles from the parsonage. "Ned was dressed very jauntily in nothing but a shirt drawn tightly to the waist with a belt, whereas the wife's attire might rather have befitted an expedition to the South Pole. She was quite weighed down with a garment of new opossum fur...and her spirits seemed as heavy as her clothing. The next day we had a thunder-storm, with pouring rain that lasted till the evening, when just after dark there came a tap at the window, accompanied by a very lamentable voice, which I recognised as belonging to Ned. He and his wife had brought me back an answer...in spite of the bad weather..... Ned had changed clothes with her when the weather

changed, by which I do not mean that he had given her his shirt but rather that he had taken her fur. Being invited into the kitchen, they forthwith sat down upon the hearth in front of the fire and some pepper having accidentally been mixed with the tea which our servant made for them, Ned seized the occasion to raise his wife's spirits by feigning death in consequence. That such an event should be regarded by her with complacency, after his recent behaviour about the fur, was possibly a suggestion of his own conscience, and accordingly he fell back in a good stage attitude, crying out, "Pepper tea! I die! I poison!" On this the poor half-drowned wife burst into a laugh, which was echoed by the defunct, and the two immediately became as merry as a couple of children."

Story telling is another diversion amongst the aborigines. Grey states (Journal, II, 253) that "In an encampment at night, the young men recount to one another their love adventures and stories, and the old men quarrel with their wives or play with their children; suddenly a deep wild chant rises on the ear, in which some newly arrived native relates the incidents of his journey, or an old man calls to their remembrance scenes of other days or reminds them that some death remains unavenged; this is done in a loud recitative, and the instant it is commenced, every other sound is hushed. A native while thus chanting is rarely or never interrupted, and when he has concluded, another replies in the same tone, until the conversation, still conducted in this manner, becomes general. In the meantime, individuals, both male and female, move about from fire to fire, paying visits, and whispering scandal to one another; but these visits are so arranged, that none can approach a fire to which, by the established usages of society, they have not a right to go; the younger females, however, who are much addicted to intrigue, find at times opportunity to exchange a word or a glance with some favoured lover."

The old game of telling the number of one's sweethearts by cracking the fingers was known to the Perth natives long before the advent of the white man.

The songs of the natives are mainly composed from incidents in their own lives, such as travel, the chase, love and war. There is always a "poet" in the family capable of extemporising songs descriptive of an adventure that may happen. Stokes remarked upon the facility and rapidity with which the Swan River native, whom they called Tom, who accompanied the party during their second expedition along the coast, could make a song about anyone whom he might choose as the subject of his poetical fancy, which... "equalled many of the Italian improvisations."

Grey says that "to a sulky old native, his song is what a quid of tobacco is to a sailor - is he angry, he sings - is he glad, he sings - is he hungry, he sings - if he is full, provided he is not so full as to be in a state of stupor, he sings more lustily than ever; and it is the peculiar character of their songs which renders them under all circumstances so solacing to them. The songs are short, containing generally only one or two ideas, and are constantly repeated over and over again....producing much the same effect as the singing of a nurse does upon a child."

The natives have songs for all occasions of ceremony, and simple as these songs appear to be, there are yet in them the same intense expressions of the various feelings that actuate the singer and form the burden of his song, as there are in our European songs of love, war and the chase. An English song, sung at the psychological moment has more than once made an important change in political history, the famous "Lilli - bolero - bullen - a la" played no small part in the politics of its day, senseless as it now appears to be, and in the same manner a taunting song sung by a few mischievous old women will be the means of inspiring a whole camp of natives to deeds of blood, the wild extemporaneous chaunts exciting them to a state of absolute frenzy.

A great Australian aboriginal poet becomes renowned from one end of the country to the other. His songs will first be sung by his own tribe and, becoming popular, will be passed on from tribe to tribe until they have been adopted by the whole continent; the natives

themselves singing them without having any idea as to where they originated. The words of the songs, through changes of dialect, may undergo many alterations, but the air never varies. Threlkald in his Australian Grammar (P. 90) noted the same peculiarity in the songs of the N.S.W. natives. "There are poets among them," he says, "who compose songs which are sung and danced by their own tribe in the first place, after which other tribes learn the song and dance, which itinerates from tribe to tribe throughout the country, until, from change of dialect, the very words are not understood by the blacks."

The vast spread of these corroboree songs and dances, and the ignorance of the natives regarding their origin or intelligibility is to some minds confirmatory evidence of there being some kind of religion mixed up with them, else why their universal spread?

Only recently a corroboree was held near Mr. Duncan McRae's Tableland Station, Croydon, which the natives called the "Poison Corroboree". According to Mr. McRae, it was one of the most important native "festivals" that had ever been held in the district. The natives maintained great secrecy in their preparations for the function which was a most elaborate and from a natives point of view, a most impressive performance. The songs and dances had been conveyed from some very distant tribes and it was evidently a very important and symbolic ceremony as almost the whole of the Tableland tribes were present; but no ^{clue as to the} meaning and purpose of the ceremony could be obtained, the natives maintaining the utmost reticence with regard to any hidden meaning which might be attached to the songs and dance. All the information gathered was that it was a "Poison Corroboree", but in what respect the word "poison" was used, whether to avert a threatened calamity, or in propitiation for poisoning fatalities which might have occurred amongst some members of the inland tribes, could not be ascertained.

Incomplete information

Memo : (It is to be hoped that Mr. Straker will supply some songs of this famous corroboree, together with their meaning.)

R.M. Lyon, writing in the "Perth Gazette" of March 30th, 1833, says that "the whole of each tribe are bards, and their evenings are generally spent around their fires, singing, or rather chanting, their poetical compositions. I have reason to believe that their history and geography are handed down from generation to generation orally in verse."

Mr. Charles Harper states that in the Ngurla tribe (mouth of De Grey River) "the songs which accompany their corroborees are inspired, they say, by the spirits of their departed kinsfolk."

F.F. Armstrong records in the "Perth Gazette", Nov. 5, 1836, that the natives "are known to be extremely sociable, and very fond of gossiping, and their social amusements, besides mock spear fights and throwing the kile-lee, is conversation round their fires at night. In the summer time the tribes for sixty miles round assemble, settle old grievances and raise new ones. At these meetings they entertain each other with the well known dances and chants etc. of the corroboree; which chants are partly narratives of battles, hunting matches and excursions to strange and distant tribes; and partly unmeaning jargon, consisting of syllables strung together at random, but in the composition of which there appears to be some rivalry, each tribe exchanging the effusions of its "ballad mongers" for those of its neighbours, while at these fire side "conversations" it is, as at others of greater pretensions, a matter of exultation to be able to favour the company with the very latest production of the lyric genius of the country; and of this kind are the compositions which have been exhibited by some of the settlers as specimens of Native Poetry, which when read, sound rhythmical (at least they appeared to the public divided into lines, with a certain harmonious equality of syllables) and have some show of rhyme; but the Interpreter is positive that they have no idea of rhymed verse as a medium of rational communication."

There is, however, a rhythmic tendency in the native poetry as the following songs sung by the Guildford natives will show. It may also be mentioned here that head rhymes were the earliest forms of European poetic literature, more particularly in French early poetry. Chaucer was one of the first to introduce tail rhymes into England.

(See also "Native Songs" collected from Vasse, Gingin, Swan, etc.)

Cockatoo's Song

Ngujee nkan'ung manung 'kan'ung
 manung nganna nganna yuerda
 boort boorla yuerda-boort-boorlala
 yugating nganna nganna yugating
 yuerda boort boorla yuerda boort boorlala
 yugating, jedda, jingong, julal, jogat,
 dta, budjar wurritch yugating, yugating.

Eaglehawk's Song

Ngyjee nganneep yugaring yungar
 mata, wara mata, karrung bur-ditch
 nganna nganna yugating, yandâr-
 dal yugating, nganna bal
 yandar-dal yuging.

Cockatoo's Reply

Nginnee kebal gungong burndock
 bauning kebal gungong burndock
 bauning, burndock bauning, burndock
 bauning.

Mr. C.A. Paterson writes a description of the "Babin" (making friends) ceremony which was performed by the tribes inhabiting the coastal districts from Geraldton to Albany, and those of the territory nearest adjoining them. "The man who wished to make friends with the entertaining tribe would enter the assemblage quietly and seat himself across the thighs of the oldest man, who was probably the most influential amongst them, or a kind of chief, clasping his hands together round the loins, and touch the belly with his. Near the friend-seeker his wives, and perhaps sons, may be seated, and some others may be sitting round, but all appear unconcerned in the proceedings. Such apparent indifference is one of the traits of a black's character. After a little while the following song is chanted, in which all assembled join :-

Bibba (breast) win wino (?)

Gnalyora (arms) win wino

Yiri (semen)

Binnana (?)

Gumbulba (urine)

Gnara (?) yaul yanilo (?)

Gumbu (urine) yaul yauilo

Matta (leg) ward wardu (?)

Yinna (foot) ward wardu

Urr!! Urr!! Urr!!

The finish of this song is an emphatic grunt-like exclamation, which is generally the finish of most of the songs in use at all their corroborees. The translation of the words that are queried could not be obtained by Mr. Paterson, although he tried several times to do so. The meaning of the song is however not difficult to understand; all the parts mentioned having become one in both as a pledge of friendship. Gumbu has been made more expressive by the addition of the affix :- gumbulba.

Grey mentions (Journal II, 307) a very favourite song of the natives to the north of Perth, which possesses some additional interest in that the tribe by whom it was at one time so frequently chanted have long been extinct. The song - sung to a wild and

plaintive air - related to some action of a native named Warbunga. In Grey's time, 1838, a descendant of the famous Warbunga bearing the same name, was then living.

Kadju bar-dook

War-bung-a-loo
War-bung-a-loo

Kadju bar-dook

War-bung-a-loo
War-bung-a-loo
War-bung-a-loo

This is repeated over and over again, in the same order.

Translation :-

Thy hatchet is near thee,
Oh Warbunga, Oh Warbunga,
Thy hatchet is near thee,
Warbunga-ho
Warbunga-ho
Warbunga-ho.

Grey states (Journal, II, 309) that a favorite song of the Murray River natives used to be :-

Kar-ro yool, i', yool-a!

Kar-rc yool, i', yool-a! etc. etc.

This they would chant in the absence of their relatives or friends upon a hunting or war excursion. (There are now only 5 Murray natives left.)

Translation :-

Return hither, hither ho!

Return hither, hither ho!

Grey collected several songs composed in different dialects, Ibid, 310-311, II, which he hoped "would serve as examples of their metre and style of poetry, and as specimens for the purpose of comparison with the songs of the natives of the other portions of the continent."

No. 1

One Voice. Djal-lee-lee-na

Chorus. Mongada, mong-a-da
Mong-a-da, mong-a-da
Mong-a-da, mong-a-da

One Voice. Ee-dal-lee-na

Chorus. Wun-a-da, wun-a-da
Wun-a-da, wun-a-da
Wun-a-da, wun-a-da.

They all join in the chorus of :-

Mon-a-da etc. etc.

Wun-a-da etc. etc.

and clap their hands in time to the air to which this chorus is sung, so that the effect produced is very good. I am unable to render this song into English.

No. 2

Dow-al nid-ja kotlay bool-a

Woor-ar wur-rang-een

Dow-al nid-ja kotlay bool-a

Woor-ar wur-rang-een

Dow-al nid-ja kotlay bool-a

Woor-ar wur-rang-een

These lines are repeated three times more and then follows the chorus :-

Ban-yeo wur-rang-een

Koong-arree wur-rang-een

Ban-yeo wur-rang-een

Koong-arree wur-rang-een etc. etc. etc.

No. 3

Katta-garoo

Ngia

Bur-na-ri-noo

Yar-dig-o-roo

Ngia

Bur-na-ri-noo etc. etc. etc.

No. 4

Yerib-a-balō, may-il boyne ga-ree

Yerib-a-balō, may-il boyne ga-ree etc. etc.

No. 5

Mar-ra boor-bā, boor-ba nung-ā

Mar-ra gul-ga, gul-gā nung-ā

An excellent specimen of a comic song sung by the natives in the vicinity of King George's Sound is also given by Grey (Journal, II, 308.)

Matta, matta

Yungore bya

Matta matta

Yungore bya etc. etc.

Translation :-

Oh, what legs, oh what legs,
The kangaroo-rumped fellows,
Oh, what legs, oh what legs, etc. etc.

One of their war songs breathes great martial passion and ardour and the men very easily work themselves up into a fury as they walk rapidly to and fro while chanting the song.

Yuâo danna

Nan-de danna! (staccato)

My-eree danna

Geor-doo danna

Boon-ga-la danna (with a shriek)

Gonogo danna

Dowal danna

Narra-ra danna etc. etc.

The last few lines increase in loudness and strength, the final effort almost exhausting the singer. By this means he completely sings the wrath out of himself, the while he sings himself full of courage.

Translation :-

Spear his forehead,
Spear his breast (bone)
Spear his liver
Spear his heart
Spear his loins
Spear his shoulder (or back)
Spear his thigh
Spear his ribs etc. etc.

A.F. Calvert (Calvert's Aborigines, P. 35) furnishes the words and music of a song given to him by a resident of W.A. who had obtained it from the natives. The song had been written to commemorate the presentation of "tribal rights" over certain lands to a white colonist who lived near Gingin and who was held in high esteem

by the natives of that district.

During the ceremony at which the adopted tribesman was present, the natives sang alternately wilbeniah (the name of the land), and yandiwirrie, the name which they had given their white friend.

As they reiterated the first word they pointed to their land and when they sang the second they pointed to the white man, indicating "that the land was his and that he belonged to the land."

(Copy of song and music to be taken from Calvert's Aborigines, P. 35.) (Now returned to Public Library.)

The same resident supplied Mr. Calvert with the following songs, appending also the circumstances under which they were sung :-

"Two natives were married, and which is not always the case, both parties were great favorites, and wonderful to relate, very young.

After the marriage, a party of natives, male and female, belonging to their tribe, gathered round the fire in front of their hut and

sang the following measure, scores of times : 'Harinan' was the

name of the Benedict and 'Woorinan' that of his Beatrice. The

air is not unmusical and the men's voices blended with those of

the women very effectively." (Music P. 36 Calvert's Aborigines.)

(Now returned to Public Library.)

The next song is sung at a corroboree. "It may be said to be divided into two parts, the first terminating at the asterisk and being sung very smoothly; the second, which is largely composed of what, in music, are called 'accidentals', is sung in a very loud excited, staccato manner, and its effect may better be appreciated by the singer speaking the notes rather than singing them." No clue as to the meaning of those words could be obtained from the natives, who merely laughed at all inquiries and said "nothing tell 'em."

(Music and words, Calvert's Aborigines, P. 37.)

"The Western Australian aboriginal does not sing in his own language only, nor does he sing only when he is pleased. I have seen two native women fight with their long, thick, hard wood staffs, accompanying their thwackings with songs in which they alternately cursed and derided each other in

Calvert's
Aborigines,

37-38

the choicest English and native Billingsgate. Indeed it may be said that whatever passion or feeling seizes them, the black fellow must express it in song, and this leads of course to the improvising of such as the following recitative which was the result of a refusal to give a notoriously drunken, lazy native woman sixpence to indulge her propensity by drinking. She professed to be hungry and to want nalgo (food), but she had at that time sufficient food in the bag slung at her back to feed her for a week. Finding her entreaties were unavailing, she sang the following to me several times - "wongy" means "say" or "promise" and that I had promised her something was one of her pleasant little fictions."

What for you white fellow wongy you
gib-em chickpence and you nothing } gib-er-em ?

pathetically

viciously

Poor old debbil me, your granny me, me } you big fellow lie
nothing nalgo, and want 'em bread and } tell 'em

(Music in Calvert's Aborigines, P. 38)

"Nothing can awake in the breast more melancholy feelings," says Grey (Journal II, 308-9) "than the funeral chants of these people. They are sung by a whole chorus of females of all ages, and the effect produced upon the bystanders by this wild music is indescribable. I will give one chant which I have heard sung upon several occasions.

The young women sing.....Kardang }
The old women.....Mammul } gar-ro

Me-la nad-jo

Nung-a-broo

Kardang }
Mammul } gar-ro

Me-la nad-jo

Nung-a-broo etc. etc.

Translation :-

My young brother }
My young son } again

In future shall I never see

(Repeated)

In this chant the old and young women respectively sing "My young son" and "My young brother"; the metre and rhyme are also very carefully preserved, and the word kardang is evidently expressly selected for this purpose; for were they speaking in prose, they would use a term denoting eldest brother, youngest brother, second brother, or some similar one; whilst I have heard the word kardang always used in this chant, whether the deceased was the first, second or third brother."

When the native Miago accompanied Captain Stokes in the "Beagle" in 1838, during the survey of the Nor' West Coast, the following song, Grey states (Journal II, 310) was composed by a native and constantly sung by Miago's mother during his absence :-

Ship bal winjal bat-tardal gool-an-eeen
 Ship bal winjal bat-tar-dal gool-an-ween
 etc. etc. etc.

Translation :

Whither is that lone ship wandering?
 Whither is that lone ship wandering?
 etc. etc. etc.

And on Miago's safe return the song given below was composed by a native, after he had heard Miago recount his adventures :-

Kan-de maar-o, kan-de maar-a-lo
 Tsail-o mar-ra, tsail-o-mar-ra-lo etc. etc.

Translation :

Unsteadily shifts the wind-o, unsteadily shifts the wind-o,
 The sails-o handle, the sails-o handle-ho.

The inability of the natives to pronounce f's or s's renders the second line of the native song rather doubtful, "tsail-o" being on account of this defect, impossible of utterance.

Another chant given by Grey is supposed to have been "sung by an old woman to incite the men to avenge the death of a young man, Grey's Journal who died from a natural cause, but whose death II, 315-6 she attributed to witchcraft and sorcery.....She stood with her legs wide apart, waving her wanna, or long digging stick in the air, and rocking her body to and fro, whilst her kangaroo skin cloak floated behind her in the wind. She was thus quite the beau ideal of a witch. The following is the sense of the words she used, at least as nearly as it is possible to express their force and meaning in English :

The blear-eyed sorcerers of the north,
 Their vile enchantments sung and wove,
 And in the night they issued forth,
 A direful people-eating drove.
 Feasting on one loved one,
 With gore-dripping teeth and tongue,
 The wretches sat, and gnawed and ate,
 Whilst their victim soundly slept,
 Yho, yang, yho yang, yang yho.

Aye, unconsciously he rested
 In a slumber too profound;
 The vile boyl-yas sat and feasted
 On the victim they had bound
 In resistless lethargy,
 Mooli-go our dear young brother,
 Where is another like to thee?
 Tenderly loved by thy mother,
 We again shall never see
 Mooli-go, our dear young brother,
 Yho, yang, yho, ho, ho.

Men, who ever bold have been,
 Are your long spears sharpened well?
 Is the keen quartz fixed anew?
 Let each shaft upon them tell.
 Poise your meer-ros long and true;
 Let the kileys whiz and whirl
 In strange contortions through the air;
 Heavy dowaks at them hurl;
 Shout the yell they dread to hear.
 Let the young men leap on high,
 To avoid the quivering spear,
 Light of limb and quick of eye,
 Who sees well has nought to fear,
 Let them shift, and let them leap,
 When the quick spear whistling flies,
 Woe to him who cannot leap!
 Woe to him who has bad eyes!

(To be corrected or deleted.)

When one of these old hags has entered upon a chant of this kind, nothing but complete exhaustion induces her to stop, and the instant she pauses, another takes up the burden of her song. The effect some of them produce upon the assembled men is very great; in fact these addresses of the old women are the cause of most of the disturbances which take place. The above translations," Grey concludes, "without being exactly literal, are as near the original as I could render them. As they are generally uttered on the spur of the moment, there is generally abundant evidence of passion and feeling about them."

Grey has clothed the crude utterances of the wild children of the bush with a certain rhythmic beauty, notwithstanding that he has endeavoured to retain the substance of the harangues of these infuriated women. It is to be regretted that the original version of the last song is absent from the book.

As a rule, the music of the greatest European masters only excites ridicule amongst the natives whose own wild and discordant noises represent to themselves the perfection of harmony. Soft and pleasing tunes, rendered with taste and expression, sound to the ears of the aboriginal much the same as Chinese music to European ears; the first feeling they raise in his mind is amusement that such a combination of ridiculous and effeminate notes, accompanied by the attitude and expression appropriate to the subject of the song should be seriously sung by the white people, and the talent for mimicry being brought to a high state of perfection in the native character, the song with which the white man hoped they would be entertained or instructed, is mimicked for weeks afterwards, the tone and attitude of the singer being most faithfully reproduced.

Grey states, however, that some of the aborigines are not insensible to the charms of the music of civilised countries, and instances (Journal, II, 305) the case of Warrup, a young native who had lived with him for several months as a servant. Warrup once accompanied Grey to an amateur theatre at Perth and "when the actors came forward and sang 'God Save the Queen', he burst into tears. He certainly could not have comprehended the words of the song, and therefore must have been affected by the music alone."

The aborigines may be said to be past masters of the art of mimicry and this notable attribute of theirs has been the subject of much speculation amongst writers as to whether it is indicative of very keen powers of observation or if it is merely a monkey like propensity common to most of the savage nations of the earth. However this may be, it is indubitable that the West Australians have brought the practice of this art to a state of perfection not to be outdone by the best European mimics.

In these performances the spectators have been noticed to follow the movements of the actors with the keenest interest, refraining from applause until the service has been concluded, when a lively discussion takes place as to the correctness of the various

parts mimicked, the slightest alteration of the original partly any one of the performers being at once observed. At the conclusion of the mock service the mistake is pointed out and the correction gone through, so that should the performance be repeated, the "piece" will be rendered absolutely correct in every detail.

Mr. Durlacher mentions the keen sense of the ridiculous possessed by all natives; they will observe at a glance anything comical or peculiar in the actions or speech of a stranger especially of white people and often at night you will hear wild screams of laughter from the natives' camps, caused by some funny man in the family going through a perfect imitation of the little peculiarities of speech and action of some European that he has met during the day, yet...a practical joke....played by one native upon another would simply mean that the ending up would be a desperate fight."

The inhabitants of the Zillertal east of Innsbruck still hold to an old marriage formula, the words of which are no longer understood. After the marriage service the door of the house was slammed in the face of the married couple, whereupon a dialogue took place between the bride and her mother-in-law in an old language, the words of which were no longer understood, but had been handed down orally for untold generations.

Song sung by the Fortescue Tableland natives, being repeated again and again :-

Goo-doo-oo-ar eh, goo-doo-do-ar

Goo-doo-do-ar madder bin-i-yar

Eh dandal a barrang

Billing-oh

The song is sung to very quick time and with a swing when sung by a large number of natives. Mr. Durlacher who transcribed the song was unable to obtain the meaning of the words.

The "Waggo-dy" corroboree of the Nor'West natives bears many similar features to the "Wanna Wa" of the Southerners, and may possibly be the original ceremony. It is a woman's corroboree, and the women prepare themselves for its performance by decorating and painting themselves. Willambong a Sherlock River native states that "as soon as the women go away to get ready for the dance, the men travel up and down the creek gathering in all the women and men they find camped along the banks. These visitors are to be spectators only. They are seated at a certain distance from the performers and remain seated until the corroboree is over. They take no part whatever in the dance, further than criticising it. The song of the women who are performing the waggo-dye is called ngilla-dye.

The following is a specimen of a Nor'West song taken from "Yabaroo's" pamphlet (P. 15) :-

Ejah Arinh cooji lilli
 Lilli la
 Cooji lilli, cooji lilli
 Cooji lilli, lilli la
 Warrarah gnorbin-ah
 Nyin-je nyin-ji, tar bukar
 Coordando wagga nookerdino
 Mia lit benah coordan
 Woonah, woonah, marrarah.

The refrain of the Bunbury corroboree song is similar somewhat to the above :

Yaga lilil yaga lilil yaga lilil.

Captain Irwin says "The talent of these natives for mimicry is considerable and shows their habits of observation. They repeat with great accuracy the conversation of the Europeans and pronounce each word correctly excepting those beginning with an s; for instance, "Swan" they call "On".

Irwin's W.A. 1835
 P. 24

Wersnop also mentions (Aborigines, P. 2) their "wonderful power of mimicry" and other writers bring many instances to prove that in mimicry, the natives are not surpassed by any race.

Missionaries of all denominations who have laboured in the native mission field have noticed the wonderful facility possessed by the aborigines in imitating the various forms of services and the peculiarities of the respective missionaries.

The lengthy services are gone through by them with an accuracy never at fault, each native taking a particular part in some elaborate ceremonial, with the same earnestness of feature which they had observed as closely on the faces of the white men, the wholeservice being conducted with an absence of exaggeration that placed the aborigine on an equality with the most renowned mimics of the present.

The women have occasionally another mode of dancing, by joining the hands together over the head, closing the feet, and bringing the knees into contact. The legs are then thrown outwards from the knee, whilst the feet and hands are kept in their original position, and being drawn quickly in again a sharp sound is produced by the collision. This is either practised alone by young girls, or by several together for their own amusement.....In another figure they keep the feet close together, without lifting them from the ground, and by a peculiar motion of the limbs advance onwards, describing a short semicircle. This amusement is almost exclusively confined to young females among themselves.

Kajiaman, York, informant :-

Nyeerimba (Caning corroboree), Meedar (Albany way), Meedar koj'-mun (nr. Albany), Beebul (Kunning corroboree), Yabaroo (north), Weerup Burnong (Williams River), Wadandee (Gingin), Mal'era (New Norcia way), Kooreen (eastern), moon-y-yagin or Wanna Wa.

A great corroboree takes place when the moolyeet comes back. His babbinguttuk is master of the ceremonies for the time being. The nyungar form two lines and up the centre of this path the moolyeet walks silently, the babbinguttuk walking behind him. At the end of the line, a bed is made and he lies down on this bed but not for long for a babbinguttuk takes him on his shoulders and holds him aloft for all the nyungar to see, and walks about with him. All the other nyungar shouting yaang, yaang, yaang. The boy is wilgeed

and painted by the babbinguttuk before he walks through the line of nyungar. His mothers, sisters and relatives cry with delight over him. This corroboree is kept up for two or three days. Afterwards he stays with his people in his own country, and a great exchange of presents takes place between the boy's own people and the babbingur. Kylies, gijee, booka, koja, dabba (the white stone bwarril and gum (balga) borra balga (a kind of gum used for the koja.) These were exchanged by geeja, boordon and warrytch and ngardarrup, various kinds of spears, beedawa (pearlshell), wilgee, koolber, kanjin and waigas (dowaks), meeros and woorda (woondas were not used by the Beebulmun people.)

An extempore song was composed at a special corroboree held on the occasion of a visit by Moore to Gigat's camp, Mangap district, during one of his excursions to the northward. The natives had been told that Moore and Lennard had grants on Gigat's country and were likely to form establishments there. This was alluded to in one of their songs and was expressed to the following effect: "That the fires of Dyandala and Millendon (the native names of Moore's and Lennard's places on the Swan) would soon be removed to Coonarup; that then there would be plenty of wheat and also bread." Moore concluded, from the words of their songs frequently containing allusions to passing events, that the ceremonies indulged in were important and served the purpose of historic records.

Beendee beendee are called wannoorig at Victoria Plains.
 Fan shaped beendee beendee are bun'aara (Vic. Plains).
 Spinning possum hair or spindle, jin'gern, goomal jowwain gorangin.
 Double beendee beendee are yabbaroo.

Victoria Plains

The West Australian, says Dr. Salvado, very rarely sings a song that does not wind up with a dance, especially when many are congregated together. Some epochs they fix by determining the day and the place of a great celebration, to which there comes a concourse of savages from the most distant parts of the bush. Met thus together in the place indicated for the feast, sometimes number-

ing three or four hundred, they start the feast with an uproarious kangaroo hunt, after which, sitting down to their meal of flesh and other foods, they paint their bodies in various colours; they adorn their heads with feathers of different species of parrots, emus, dogs'tails and so forth. The place for the feast is chosen by the director or master of ceremonies, and must be level, not stony and every herb or root which is found there must be removed, Round the fires - the dance being celebrated at night - when everything is ready, the M.C. with all the dancers advances to the chosen place and there gives notices of the figures to be gone through. Arranged in a line with the M.C. at the head, the latter begins to move and make various gesticulations with his arms and legs, and contortions of the body; all the others imitating him exactly, marking meanwhile the musical measure beating the earth with their feet, and at every second beat which they give more strongly, they utter truncated sounds, strongly accentuated, as ah-ah-ah, e-e-e, ee-ee-ee, and so on, and finally wind up the dance with a base and prolonged oh! followed by a shrieking ee. After some rest they return and place themselves in order for the second, third and fourth figures, and these consist of various portions of the body, as sometimes dancing erect, then curved, then kneeling. The movements of the director's arms are very varied and are all accurately followed. They often carry in their hands branches, shaking them in the air and describing various figures, then taking the spear, they imitate the movements of hunt and war, or they catch one another by the hand, and forming circles they beat palm to palm in the dance. (Salvado, P. 308) (To be continued.)

Ngalyart, informant

oogarree = the hair string wound round the head and well wilgeed and greased.

Yanjee = emu feather hair dressing

Nyiddee = shaved stick for hair

Wajoong = the hair done up chignon fashion

The hair cutting ceremony took place in the summer time and a big corroboree gathered for the ceremony, called manja. The Babbie or kobong was made at the same time and it was he and his people (who

were noyyung to the young man) who took the principal part in the cutting. The young man dreamed of the person who afterwards became his Babbin. If they were hit by anyone in their dream they made that person babbin.

Mr. Withnell furnishes a description of the corroborees danced by the natives of the Roebourne district. (Withnell's Pamphlet P. 26 et seq.) "The men dress as follows : the body is greased and then stripes of white down feathers, red ochre, white pipeclay and charcoal are affixed to and painted on the body perpendicularly, but on the thighs the stripes are horizontal. The hair is dressed with white feathers and wood shavings. In each hand is carried a stick about two feet long with shavings along them at regular intervals. They wear a bunch of emu feathers on each arm and a larger bunch fastened as an appendage to the back of the belt. The master of ceremonies is also in full dress, but has his headdress of shaved sticks, laced and interlaced with spun hair, to which are adhered down feathers. The songster has two flat smoothly-hewn thin half-circles of wood called "coyleys".

Northampton, also Mt. View.

Yardee kaanilgoo

The nose sticks may be carved with figures of emus, birds, kangaroo etc.

To sing, warranan

Yuin

They have "moondung" corroborees when an effigy somewhat resembling a human being is made, and forms part in the ceremonies. They afterwards spear it and break it up, No women can look at this corroboree.

Their general attire, a cloak, belt, forehead band, nose bone, reed necklace, spun on opossum string.

The word corroboree has come to be the generally accepted term used by Europeans in describing the songs and dances of the aborigines. Any native social gathering is included in this general term. It was doubtless derived from the N.S.W. dialect and is now used all

over Aus. even by some of the aborigines themselves. It may be heard from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Albany.

In the S.W. dialects the term for dance is kening, kan, genening, kaaning, ganna, kannila etc.

Dances are usually distinct from ceremonial observances connected with initiation.

The three elements which are represented constitute a resemblance between native entertainments and European opera.

The Eucla corroboree is, according to Mr. Williams, danced by both men and women and consists in shaking the legs and wriggling the feet along the ground, performing at the same time a number of little jumps and knocking the knees together in that curious manner which prevails everywhere. The men wave their hands whilst performing and the women flourish a wommera in their right hands.

The knee clapping and quivering dances of the women, or the shuffling of their feet.

The Wonunda men (Eyre's Sand Patch) wore their hair, which was straight and matted with dirt, in high chignons, which were bound with strings made from the skin of the tamar or koolong, a large wallaby from those parts. No clothing is worn by these people, they kept themselves warm at night by little fires on both sides of them and a breakwind of boughs to windward. They lubricated their skin with a compound of grease and red ochre.

The mummerderra or bullroarer has no special significance amongst the Southern natives whose women can see it if they like. It is given to boys to play with. They know it is used in the North for rain-making, but they have a belief that if they tried it for that purpose in the South it would bring great thunder and lightning and perhaps kill them all.

The following are the names given to some of the corroborees danced by Jubyché's people : Most of these are what is called "Bibber kog'ara wab'ber-ruk" (play making corroborees). Beebal, kog-ara, ka-ka-rah, jul-gytch, mir-dar, welp, moor-or-dung. Corroborees and songs have been obtained from the Nor'West, Bunbury, Northam, Albany, etc.

Baabur's description of the Burial of Maman, the making of the grave, its adornment with the shaved sticks of the performers, and the formation of the "dual maman" out of two blocks of wood, etc. must be confirmed and elaborated by William, who has frequently seen one of these ceremonies.

Baabur stated that he had only witnessed one of these great ceremonies.

In deprecating the discontinuance of this, and the initiation and other ceremonies, Baabur said to me, "Now the old people are all dead, the young people do as they like - they are 'moojoo' all the time."

They played a game with a long stick, in the old fashion of French and English.

Games

The Southern natives had many games, athletic and otherwise. A kind of native hockey or Irish hurley (Toordeet out etc.) was played with a red gum nut for the ball, the stick being crooked by the action of fire, sides were taken and two natives started the nut, but there was no measured number of goals; the side that scored the most at the end of the game being declared the winner. They had another kind of game, called meetch kambong (nut game) played with a gum nut. The fire game, or kala kambong, consisted of a tall blackboy being set alight at the top, round its base the natives stationed themselves to guard the fire from being put out. The opposing parties armed themselves with small boughs and tried to break through the cordon and extinguish the fire. Both these games led to a good deal of scrimmaging.

Swimming races in the rivers and estuaries of the South were

also held, women and men taking part in these. The women generally beat the men at these races. The women also vied with each other in tree climbing feats, climbing the highest trees in the South West with no other aid than their native hammer afforded; with this they cut a notch in the tree above their heads and then sticking the pointed end of the hammer into the bark, they raised themselves up by this means, their left hand clasping the tree, their toe in the notched hole.

They are unrestrained except by their tribal laws and customs, easily pleased, but just as easily offended. In some camps you will find not one, but several Mrs. Gummidges, who cry on all and every occasion, who will wake you in the early dawn with their wailing, having perhaps suddenly remembered some of their relatives who had been dead for years, who are indeed perpetually doleful. In other camps a spirit of cheerfulness will obtain amongst the older women and laughter will be frequent. As a rule the natives are a merry, light-hearted people. They have songs for every occasion, and there are bards in every tribe. If a native is sad he sings, if revengeful, he sings; if glad, he sings; if combatively inclined, he sings of the circumstance. He witnesses a dog fight, and breaks into song. War, hunting, mourning, tribal and personal - there are songs for all these.

Sometimes a man who is what we would call spoiling for a fight suddenly collects his war weapons and struts up and down in front of the other members of the camp, biting his beard and spitting it out, rolling his eyes in the most approved fashion, trailing his spears instead of a coat, thus challenging one or other member of the group. One of the old grandmothers observes him, and not wishing to have the camp disturbed, she sings at him :

Yoong'aroong'a moo'rerda bur'ree-er'da wan'ganing
Yoongaroonga meeree geejee burree-erda wanganing.

(Look at the yoongar tramping up and down, talking about killing all his relations, look at him,) and she continues to sing until the fighting fever cools and the young man slinks away to his hut, He will very probably relieve his feelings by beating one or more of his wives, for a native can have as many wives as he chooses

provided he can keep them in meat food.

J. Whitchurch states that the Busselton corroborees always took place in the evening and usually the day before a fight. These corroborees consisted of dancing in a circle round a fire, (the women being naked, the men almost so). The noise caused by the stamping of their feet could be heard hundreds of yards away. Then they sat down in sections with legs crossed, and beat the ground rhythmically with their sticks.