

MAGIC 02

Pointing sticks, curiously shaped stones, mirudi (bullroarers), pearlshell and bones were the chief magic or Mobarn, implements used amongst the Ngadawonga, Waiawonga, Ngainwonga, Kurdawonga, and other tribes of the Upper Murchison. The possessors of magic, or sorcerers, were called Mobarn or Wandigulongu.

If a Ngainwonga man wishes to be revenged upon a member of some other tribe, he will take a nose stick, which he will rub over with a little grease and ochre, or he may put a few bits of down upon it towards the point, and going into a solitary place, usually on or near some boulders, he holds the stick in the direction he wishes the magic to go, singing furiously but not loudly, the incantation which must accompany the magic in the stick. He then thrusts the stick through his nasal septum and returns to camp. Most of the older residents in camp, seeing him return with the implement through his nose, know that he has been performing magic. When they hear of the death of some member of the neighbouring tribe, they know that the magic has reached its victim.

A mirudi also carries magic to distant tribes. Jal, when at Lake Way, yumbu-ed (made magic) a mirudi and sent it towards the Cue district in search of a man named Townsend. The mirudi was a year and a half (two summers and one winter) making the journey, but when it found Townsend it killed him, and returned afterwards to Jal, who is mobarn. Jal is distinctly feared by the members of his own and neighbouring tribes, for he invariably uses his magic for evil purposes.

A nose bone, made from the forearm of a kangaroo, was etched with bands, irregular markings and burnt spots, and was used to "point" a member of the Ngadawonga tribe by a Ngainwonga whose woman the Ngadawonga man had taken. The stick was pointed during a visit of the Ngainwonga man to Ngadawonga territory, and a week before I left the Peak Hill district, I was asked to go and see the victim who was suffering internally. He felt that the magic had come from Meekatharra, as the part affected had been

turned in that direction when the magic entered into him. Counter magic and a porous plaster applied to the pain very soon alleviated it, and probably ere this return magic had been sent to the Ngainwonga. Both the sender and receiver of the magic were "mobarn" but the magic of the Ngainwonga man was the stronger.

Magic stones are <sup>either</sup> put inside the person to be mobarned or are taken out of someone who has been mabarned. Magic stones are also kept in the stomach of the mobarn man, from whence they can be taken at will. When sent on an avenging errand, the owner of the mobarn marda (stone) touches himself/<sup>on the part</sup> which he desires to affect by his magic, and then holding the stone between his finger and thumb, he stretches his arm out in the direction he wishes the magic to go, either singing the magic, or exhaling it in his breath. By and by when he looks at the stone he sees it covered with the blood of his victim and he knows it has performed its work.

When the stone was used for healing, a species of rough massaging, or sucking the affected part, drew the evil magic from out the victim whom it had entered, the stone being afterwards placed on the wound, in order to complete the healing process.

A small piece of pearlshell called "Daramara," was used principally as a rainmaking stone by the Wirdinya and Waianwonga. It was also used to transmit evil magic into a member of another tribe. No change appeared to occur in the pearlshell, as occurs in the stone to show that the magic has taken effect, but the death of someone belonging to the camp was watched for, and when it came, whether he was the person aimed at or not, the mobarn who projected the magic was satisfied.

Jal's special magic implements were the jimari (flint flakes) which he could produce from his stomach at will, and send in the direction of the person he wished to injure. I possess two jimari which returned to their owners after having accomplished their revengeful errand. They belonged to members of the Wajari tribe and are supposed to be covered with the blood of the victims.

Should a man point a stick or bone in the presence of other men, all these will be careful to get behind him while the magic is being projected, otherwise they fear they may intercept the evil magic going from such stick or bone.

The Upper Murchison tribes could not be induced to point any other stick than their own, nor would they willingly touch a magic stick from another tribe, and no man who is not mobarn will take a rain stone, magic bone, or other magic implement in his hand. All rain stones are mobarn, and are used equally to project magic and to make rain.

A magic stone has been left hidden in a spot over which it was known the victim it was destined to enter should pass, the magic stone going inside him and then returning to its hiding place where it was picked up by its owner.

When it is desired to mobarn a man who is in the same tribe, the implement used may be put in the hair of the person who is mobarning, or at the back of his hair belt. Wherever he places it, he arranges that the part from which the magic issues, shall be turned towards the person for whom it is intended.

A spear or other weapon in the hands of a mobarn man will be yumbu-ed, or made mobarn, (yumbu is a Ngainwonga term) and being pointed towards the person for whom it has been mobarned will reach him with its deadly message.

Articles bartered from long distances, pearlshell, small larras, crystal cubes, hair string, etc., appear to possess special value on account of the unknown magic attached to them from the various tribes they pass through. The magic in bartered implements is not injurious to the purchaser.

In all tribes there are one or more mobarn men and all these men are supposed to be in possession of some article with which they can project magic. Some mobarn men are more renowned than others, and a well-known mobarn from one tribe will be asked to attend a patient in a neighbouring tribe. Some mobarn have, however, no "stock-in-trade," the magic being in their stomachs, from which they can eject it by exhalation.

Gunabirding was the only mobarn yamaji in the Milguin local group. (Ngadawonga and Kurduwonga met at the Milguin River.) His magic was situated in his stomach and breast. He exhaled short quick puffs of breath which he caught between his fingers and threw in the direction of his enemy.

Rough massaging of the affected parts, accompanied by "magic" breathing, was Gunabirding's cure for internal complaints.

In making rain, no change was made in the form of the magic employed. Gunabirding went into an open space, or preferably on top of a low hill and taking the magic from his breast, he flicked it to the points of the compass. Gunabirding's rain-making and healing services have been in request by the Wajari, Ngadawonga and Kurduwonga tribes.

Some mobarn suck the wound, others make the patient eat or drink some filthy decoction in which uring, excreta, semen or blood may be mixed, others again massaging the seat of pain, drawing out various small articles, bits of stick, stone, bone, etc., from the wounded part. Each mobarn appeared to throw a little of his personality into his methods of treatment, but the manner of projecting the evil magic was somewhat similar amongst the Ngadawonga, Ngainwonga, Wajari, Kurduwonga and Waiawonga people.

Amongst the Ngadawonga and neighbouring tribes, there are many different ways of throwing magic, but those common to all the tribes bordering the Ngadawonga are : pointing the bone, breathing the magic or spitting it towards the enemy, putting fire magic into the implement of destruction and heating it towards that end, sticking a piece of pearlshell or curiously shaped stone in the ground and slanting it in the direction of the enemy and taking the magic from the stomach and throwing it towards the enemy.

There are mobarn women also, though these will not be found in all the tribes. I only met one woman on the Murchison, Nyundiwidi, a Ngadawonga, who was mobarn, her possession of the "spirit" boy and girl, Kurdarn, giving her the mobarn power.

Nyundiwidi could send her boy "familiar" to punish those who offended her or her people. The boy entered the vitals of the victim, causing him or her great pain, finally killing them. Nyundiwidi always saw her little messenger returning from those journeys covered with blood.

When a woman desires to inflict magic upon another of whom she may be jealous, she usually aims at the womb of her victim, and causing a flooding by her magic, the victim soon dies. If it is a fat, well-favoured woman upon whom the magic is projected, it is against the fat breasts and body that the magic is directed, and the woman who has been mobarned gradually loses flesh, and knowing she is powerless against the magic that is eating her flesh away, she soon dies.

Women are careful not to touch the wannas (digging sticks) or other possessions of women which may be lying about apparently carelessly, as they fear that these have been mobarned and are left about deliberately for them to pick up.

Magic can be put into food and drink by mobarn men or women, those who eat the food dying in great agony.

No woman must ever mention the word "mirudi." A woman who had inadvertently heard the term "mirudi tchabargardi," (a little mirudi) uttered by an elderly man towards a friend of his who had made some rude noise, did not know its significance, and some days later when a member of the camp made a similar noise, the woman said laughingly, "Mirudi tchabargadi!" The moment she uttered it, she knew it was not a word she should have mentioned, but the mirudi which she called went inside her and she very soon died.

When a Ngainwonga man is projecting a mirudi or other implement, he first puts his own magic into it, the personal magic being called yumbu. It is magic-filled or "yumbu-ed" and then sent on its message.

The larger yinma (long carved flat stick) is not used to project magic, but a smaller yinma, called tchabin-tchabin, is used by the Ngainwonga and Ngadawonga for magical purposes. It is held at a fire, the end being made quite hot. The heated end

is then pointed in the direction of the enemy and a piece of it breaks off and goes inside the victim.

A young Ngainwonga woman once picked up a mirudi which she saw lying on the ground, and without knowing its importance and sacredness, she brought the strange implement home to her husband. She had been bilyunu to him from her babyhood. As soon as her husband saw it, he yumbuled it, and the mirudi went into the woman and killed her.

### RAINMAKING

Rainmaking is performed in various ways. Yangalngunda, a Wirdinya rainmaker possessed a small disc of pearlshell called baba jaramara or Mijarba. When he desired a rainfall, he went on top of some hills in his own country and holding the disc between his teeth and with fingers and thumb, he gave a series of puffing breaths, waving the jaramara in different directions after each puff. Rain was expected to follow very soon after this ceremony.

Another method amongst the Wirdinya was to take the mijarba to a cleared spot, called Kaigarina Wajungu and place it edge-wise in the ground. Then standing over it, the rainmaker sang the following words :-

Mijarba yurin baba jaramara,  
Mijarba yurin jaramara.

After the song, the mijarba was taken out of the ground and replaced in its fibre covering until its services were again requisitioned.