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DAVID NUTT, LONG ACRE.

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## ORDINARY MEETING.\*

THE REV. CANON GIRDLESTONE, IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the following paper was read by the Rev. Dr. Walker in the absence of the Author :—

*PICTORIAL ART AMONG THE AUSTRALIAN  
ABORIGINES.* By R. H. MATHEWS, Esq., L.S.  
(With two Plates.)

### INTRODUCTORY.

**M**OST of the drawings of the Australian aborigines are very primitive in execution, and conventional in type, but they are nevertheless of unquestionable value to the student of archæology. I have made accurate copies of a large number of these pictorial representations, which have not hitherto been recorded, and propose to treat the subject under the following divisions, namely: Rock Paintings—Rock Carvings—Marked Trees—Drawings on the Ground—Images—and Carvings on Wooden Implements.

The Right Rev. Dr. Thornton, Bishop of Ballarat, Victoria, having favoured me with a copy of his valuable paper on "Problems of Aboriginal Art in Australia," read before your Institute on the 7th of April, 1897,† I have presumed to forward the following pages on the same subject, in the hope that they may, in some slight degree, serve to continue the interest awakened by his Lordship's paper. (I

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\* December 4th, 1899.

† *Journ. Trans. Vic. Inst.*, vol. xxx, pp. 205-232.

may state that this subject was treated by me before the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Section F, at Sydney, New South Wales, January, 1898.)

### ROCK PAINTINGS.

In a number of articles contributed to different ethnological and philosophical societies, I have given a short account of the first discovery of these drawings in several parts of Australia, and described the manner in which the different styles of rock paintings are produced by the native artists, so that it will not be necessary to again refer to these parts of the subject. I shall therefore proceed at once to describe the cave paintings.

Cave 1.—This shelter is situated in a high escarpment of Hawkesbury sandstone, known as "The Wallaby Rock," near the left side of a small creek, about 15 chains in a north-easterly direction from the north-east corner of Portion No. 58 of 40 acres, in the parish of Bulga, county of Hunter. It is 85 feet long, and extends into the face of the cliff 18 feet at the widest part; the height from the floor to the roof at the back of the recess is 8 feet, which increases to 11 feet 6 inches at the entrance. The floor consists chiefly of soil and ashes, through which the rock protrudes in places. The front of the cave faces N. 60° W., and judging by the smoke-stains on the roof, as well as by the ashes on the floor, appears to have been used as a camping place by the aborigines. On digging into the floor, I found several stone-knives used by the natives in dressing the skins of animals, and for other purposes.

The total number of hands in this shelter, all of which are shown in the plate, is ninety-seven, four of them being shut hands, and thirty right hands. Some of them are smaller than others, and in several the arm is delineated almost to the elbow. Among the hands are a boomerang, and tomahawk with handle, executed in white stencil in the same manner. There are also three groups of lines drawn in white; the first group contains eight lines 9 inches long, with a white bar across the top of them; the second group has ten white lines 2 feet long; and the third group eight lines 15 inches in length. White and red lines, similar in character to these, have been observed in a number of caves, and are worthy of careful study and comparison. On the left of the boomerang is a pick-shaped object drawn in red,

the only instance of the employment of that colour in the cave. The other paintings represent a fish, a human figure, and two irregularly shaped objects, all drawn in white outline.

This cave is one of the largest—as well as being amongst those containing the greatest number of drawings—which I have visited. To a spectator standing in front of it, with its immense array of upwards of a hundred objects painted in white on the dark coloured rock, the view is very imposing. The distance from the cave to the Macdonald river, in which the water is permanent, does not exceed half-a-mile.

Cave 2.—This rock-shelter is situated at a place known as “The Gulf,” about 13 or 14 miles from Rylstone, in the parish of Growee, county of Phillip. It is within sight of the main road from Rylstone to Bylong, and on the western side of it. The cave consists of a large hollow in a huge isolated boulder of Hawkesbury sandstone about 60 feet in diameter, and 35 feet high. The cavity measures  $37\frac{1}{2}$  feet in length, 13 feet in height, and 12 feet in depth from the entrance to the back wall, and faces N.  $35^{\circ}$  E. The floor is composed of sandy soil near the front, but farther in the rock comes to the surface, and the cave bears evidence of having been occupied as a place of residence. Permanent water is obtainable in Gulf Creek which runs close by.

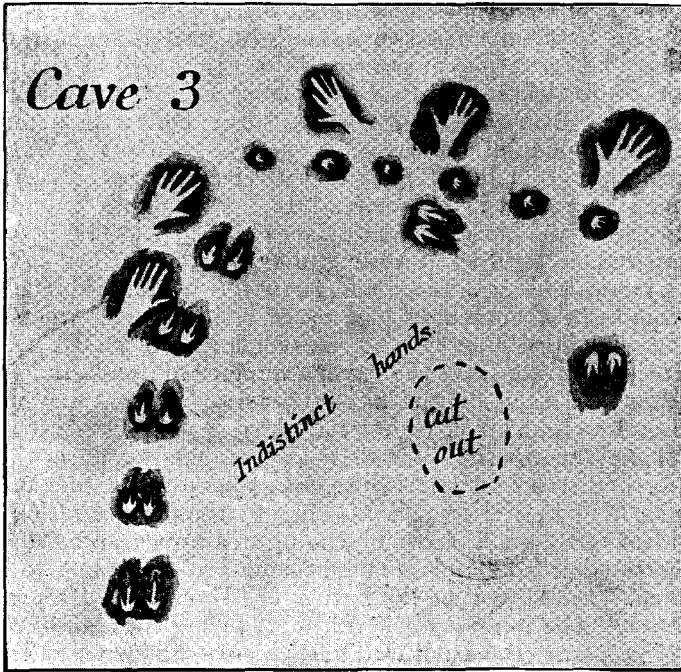
If the observer faces the cave, a number of hands and two feet may be seen on the left—the latter being apparently those of a child, six or eight years old—all done in red stencil. Looking towards the right we see seven hands, one of them being shut, stencilled in white, and above them four more hands done in red stencil. Owing to the disintegration of the face of the rock on which the figures appear, a considerable number of hands have become too indistinct to be copied. The lowest of the figures are about 8 feet from the floor, and the highest about 12, there being a ledge of rock running along the back wall of the cave, about 6 feet from the ground, upon which the operators probably stood when doing the work.

This cave is chiefly remarkable for the two stencilled feet, which are about 12 feet from the surface of the ground. In order to stencil them at that height, it is likely that forked saplings were placed against the rock to support the weight of the child, who held its feet in position whilst the artist blew the colouring pigment around them. A theory propounded by some of the white residents in that district is

that perhaps the feet were severed from the body of a dead person, and applied to the rock.

Cave 3 (Fig. 1).—This cave is in a high rocky escarpment of Hawkesbury sandstone, forming the boundary of Portion No. 65 of 40 acres in the parish of Price, county of Phillip. The nearest permanent water is in Cooyal Creek, about a mile to the southward. The shelter is 30 feet long,

Fig. 1.



extending into the rock about 15 feet. The height at the entrance is 6 feet, increasing to 8 feet inside, owing to the dome-shaped roof.

The end of the cave on the right hand side of the interior on entering, is somewhat circular, the back wall curving round towards the front, or outwards. Out of a considerable number of paintings in this shelter, I have reproduced one

of the most important groups, drawn around the curved wall referred to. The figures plainly distinguishable, at the time of my visit, in this part of the cave, consisted of two left and three right hands; seven double tracks of a kangaroo, and six tracks of what appears to be a native dog's foot. Probably the feet of dead animals were employed in both instances. There is also the mark where some object has been cut out by some white visitor—most likely a hand. To the left of the kangaroo tracks—between these tracks and where the object has been cut out—and also above the dog's tracks, several paintings of hands have become too indistinct to copy.

This cave faces N. 35° E., and is about 150 feet above the flat ground to the south of it. It would have formed a very comfortable camping place in the winter time, when water could have been obtained in the small gullies running out of the hills close by. All the drawings have been executed in the red stencil method.

Cave 4.—This rock-shelter is situated in a high escarpment of Hawkesbury sandstone about 5 chains on the eastern side of the old Bulga road, and about a mile north-easterly from Portion No. 4, of 21 acres 2 roods 16 perches, in the parish of Milbrodale, county of Northumberland. It is 37 feet long, 17 feet deep, and 12 feet high, and faces N. 70° E. The floor contains hearth rubbish, and the roof is begrimed with smoke, indicative of the place having been used for residential purposes. Water is obtainable in Bulgar Creek, about a quarter of a mile distant.

At the present time there is but one right hand, done in white stencil, in this cave. There is a human figure and parts of two others outlined in black, and shaded in the same colour. There are three representations of snakes drawn in the same manner; also two objects, one on the right and the other on the left of the plate, probably intended to represent native weapons. What appears to be intended for a human head and shoulders is drawn in black outline, filled in with lines of red and black mixed indiscriminately. Towards the left is shown a pick-shaped object, similar to the one represented in Cave 1, outlined in black, and shaded with the same colour. There is also a native shield outlined and shaded in red, with a median bar down the centre. Crossing the lower end of the last named is a drawing in black, the meaning of which is not very obvious. Besides the foregoing there are three groups of

those remarkable white lines before referred to, one group containing three strokes, another five, and another eight. Between the last mentioned and the stencilled hand are seven white spots, with a short stroke downwards from the central one.

Cave 5.—The low escarpment of sandstone containing this shelter is within Portion No. 9 of 47 acres, in the same parish and county as the last described. It is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  chains easterly from the new Bulga road, and about 12 chains from Darkey Creek, in which the water is permanent. The cave, which faces N.  $40^{\circ}$  E., is 37 feet long, 11 feet high, and varying from 18 to 26 feet from front to back. The floor consists partly of rock, but chiefly of hearth rubbish and soil, the roof bearing the stains of the smoke of numerous fires, showing that the place has been used as a camp by the aborigines.

The drawings, which are all done in white stencil, consist of thirteen hands, two boomerangs, and an object 3 feet 9 inches long, by 3 inches wide, evidently a native weapon either flat and sword-like, or cylindrical and solid, as a waddy. Although the rock is hard, durable and dry, and the cave faces the forenoon sun, most of these paintings are rather faint, indicating that they are of considerable age.

#### ROCK CARVINGS.

It is not my intention on the present occasion to add a plate showing specimens of rock carvings, but will invite the reader to peruse a series of articles on this subject written by me during the past four or five years, which are illustrated by numerous plates.

In some of the articles referred to, I gave an account of the discovery of rock carvings in the vicinity of Sydney in 1788, shortly after the colony of New South Wales was founded, and also mentioned other parts of Australia where similar carvings have been observed since that period. In other papers directions were given for copying these drawings from the rocks on which they occur, by means of measurements and sketches made in a note-book, with instructions for the preparation of plates for publication. In other communications I explained the manner in which carvings were cut upon the surface of the rocks by the native artists, and the possible purpose of the drawings. Several of my papers were largely occupied with illustrative



specimens, amounting in the aggregate to upwards of two hundred and thirty separate carvings, representing human beings, animals of various kinds, warlike implements, dances, hunting and fishing scenes, etc.\*

#### MARKED TREES.

Aboriginal drawings on trees consist of representations of men, animals, weapons, the different heavenly bodies, lightning, and a variety of characters consisting of curved and zigzag lines, lozenge and oval shaped designs, chevrons, bars, etc. Marked trees of this kind are found at those camps where the initiation ceremonies are performed. The graves of the natives, the scenes of some of their fights, and remarkable events in their daily life are likewise commemorated by curious symbols marked on trees standing around the spot.

The specimens of native art found upon trees are executed in various ways. The mode of drawing most generally adopted is to outline the object by a nick cut with the tomahawk into the bark of the tree. In some cases the whole of the bark within the outline of the figure is removed; in other instances a portion of the bark is first removed from the tree, and the design cut into the wood. Some of these native drawings are merely scratched upon the bark of the tree, whilst others are painted upon the bark with red ochre or charcoal.

I will now proceed to describe some carvings copied by me from a number of trees on a Kamilaroi Bora ground on Redbank Creek, a tributary of the Weir River, in the parish of Tallwood, county of Carnarvon, Queensland. These carvings are shown on Plate X, hereto annexed, as Figs. 1 to 18 inclusive. Fig. 8 represents the crescent moon, cut through the bark, and a short distance below it are four zigzag lines. On another tree, Fig. 13, there is a centipede 3 feet 1 inch in length, with eighteen legs, chopped through the bark into the wood, with some diamond or lozenge shaped devices below it. On a forked box tree was the outline of an iguana, Fig. 17, 5 feet 2 inches long, cut through the bark. Fig. 18 represents a carpet snake

\* *Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc. Aust.*, Queensland Branch, vol. x, pp. 46-70; *Ibid.*, vol. xi, pp. 86-106. *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, London, vol. xxv, pp. 145-163; *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii, pp. 532-541. *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.*, Philadelphia, vol. xxxvi, pp. 195-208 and pp. 466-478.

9 feet 4 inches in length, with its head toward the ground, cut in the same manner. The marking on the remainder of the trees shown in the plate consists of the usual zigzag, lozenge, oval, and other devices. Growing near these was a small box tree, along the bole of which a wavy band about 2 inches wide had been cut with a tomahawk through the bark, extending from near the ground to a height of about 25 feet, representing a tree which had been struck by lightning; this tree is not shown in the plate.

#### DRAWINGS ON THE GROUND. (Plate X.)

Earthen figures formed in high relief, or engraven upon the turf, representing human beings, different animals, implements, and the curious designs called *yowan* by the Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri tribes, are found chiefly at those places where the youths are admitted into the status of manhood. Where they have been observed in other localities the circumstances would lead us to suppose that they were connected with some tribal myth or superstition, or were used on festive occasions.

Native drawings on the ground consist of several kinds. Some are first outlined by laying down logs, bark, bushes, or stones, to a certain height, and then covering them with earth to complete the figure. This was obviously done because the natives had very primitive tools for digging; in large drawings, raising a considerable quantity of earth would require much time and labour, especially if the ground were hard or clayey. In other instances the figures are formed entirely of the loose earth heaped up so as to resemble the horizontal image of the required object. Another kind of drawing consists of representations of men, animals, and devices in various patterns cut into the surface of the ground; a nick or groove from 2 to 3 inches wide and about 2 inches deep being dug in the turf along the outline of each figure. These grooves were dug with tomahawks, or with flat pieces of wood on which an edge had been formed. Other figures again are merely drawn upon the sand with a stick held in the hand of the operator.

In the annexed plate I have reproduced some of the ground drawings copied by myself at the same Bora camp as that containing the trees already dealt with. Figs. 19 to 45 will fairly represent the different patterns of *yowan* carved

upon the turf on that occasion. The largest of the designs was 37 feet in length, by 7 feet in width, part of which is shown in Fig. 31; another was 29 feet by 5 feet, and is shown in its entirety in Fig. 34. Some of the smallest of these carvings in the soil were only 2 or 3 feet in length, filling out spaces between trees. A good deal of the soil cut out in carving these designs was used in building the raised representations of Baiamai and Goberangalnga described farther on.

Fig. 46 represents a legendary, serpent-like monster called the Kurree, which is supposed to have its abode in deep lagoons and other sheets of water, and devours human beings who may come within its reach. This drawing measures 39 feet in length, and its greatest width is about a foot. It is formed by a groove about 3 inches wide dug into the turf along its outline. Fig. 47 is a woman cut in the ground in a similar manner. The height is 7 feet 4 inches, but would be more if the legs were not so much distended.

Fig. 48 is a huge horizontal representation of Baiamai, lying on his back, formed by building up the loose earth, which was 1 foot 2 inches high at the chest. The length of the figure was 9 feet 6 inches, and the width from hand to hand 9 feet.

Fig. 49.—On the opposite side of the pathway, close to the last described, was a figure of Goberangalnga, the wife of Baiamai, formed in the same way, but with the addition of a coat of kneaded clay on top, in which were moulded the features of the face, the mammæ, etc. The length of the figure was 10 feet 9 inches, with a distance of 8 feet between the hands.

Fig. 50 delineates a man with a boomerang in each hand, and a belt around the waist. The object 2 feet 5 inches long rising from the top of the head, was, the native artist told me, intended to represent a feather stuck in the hair. This drawing bears a striking resemblance to some of the aboriginal rock pictures found in other districts.

Fig. 51 represents two death adders, formed of raised earth, with their heads in the same direction. One of these reptiles is 9 feet long, the other 10 feet 6 inches.

Fig. 52. This drawing, which is outlined by a nick dug into the soil in the way already stated, represents a cod-fish 9 feet in length, and 3 feet 8 inches across the body.

Fig. 53 was intended to denote an emu, and was formed

in the same manner as the last described. Its length from the bill to the tail was 12 feet 6 inches, and its height from the feet to the top of the back 7 feet 9 inches. The legs are short in proportion to the body, being 2 feet 6 inches long—perhaps to indicate that the bird is sitting or crouching down.

Fig. 54 represents two more drawings of death adders, also formed by heaping up the loose earth into the required shape. Their heads and tails are almost touching, and the length of each reptile is a little over 16 feet.

In a paper contributed by me to the Royal Society of Victoria in 1896, describing the initiation ceremonies of one of the native tribes, I briefly referred to the marks on the trees and on the ground dealt with in this article, but no plate illustrating them has hitherto appeared in any publication. They are therefore quite original.

#### IMAGES.

Under this designation I propose to include all figures formed of wood, bark, clay, or other material. These images or effigies differ from earth-moulded drawings lying flat upon the surface of the ground, because they are not attached to the soil, but are movable. They comprise human figures, representations of the sun, moon, reptiles, birds and other objects.

At the Burbung ceremonies of the aboriginal tribes on the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers, New South Wales, I have seen an image of Dhurramoolun—a spirit whom they reverence, or rather fear—formed partly of wood and partly of clay, and placed leaning against an adjacent tree to keep it in a vertical position. This effigy was manufactured in the following manner. A sapling on which were two opposite branches was selected, and cut down; the two branches were then chopped off at such a length as to be equal to that of a man's arms. The stem of the sapling was next cut through about a foot from these two lateral branches, for the purpose of representing a man's head and neck. The main stem was again cut through about 5 feet on the other side of the branches in order to form the body and one leg. Mud or clay was then plastered all over this wooden framework, or "skeleton," in such a way as to make it resemble a human being. Only one leg was represented, because Dhurramoolun is believed to have but one of these

useful members. The fingers, toes, face, and other features were formed of clay, and attached to the wooden frame. Human hair and feathers were then fastened on the head, thus completing the rude image.

Black fellows belonging to the south-east coast of New South Wales, between Sydney and Cape Howe, have told me that at their Bunan and festive gatherings, images were formed of mud or clay and placed against trees for the purpose of supporting them in an upright position.

In an article dealing with the Bora ceremonies of the Kamilaroi tribes at Gundabloui,\* I described two male figures cut out of bark, and fixed up against trees. One of these had his head ornamented with emu's feathers, and the other held in his hand a *hielamon*, or native shield. I also described the figure of an iguana about 3 feet long, a figure of the sun 2 feet in diameter, and one of the full moon 18 inches in diameter, all cut out of bark and fastened to trees.

Mr. John K. McKay, of Dungog, informs me that when travelling on the Moonie river upwards of thirty years ago, he saw an image made by the aborigines on the right bank of that stream, about thirty miles above Nindigully, Queensland. It was apparently intended, he thought, to represent a swan of enormous proportions, or some mythologic creature of aboriginal lore. The body was about 15 feet long, 6 feet wide, and about 4 feet high; it was formed of bushes and leaves pressed closely together, and covered with a thick coating of mud. The head and neck consisted of a bent log of the required shape, about 10 feet long, one extremity of which was fixed into the ground at one end of the heap of bushes, the other extremity being cut into shape to represent the head, which was elevated several feet above the surface, the whole figure was then ornamented with daubs of white and red—the head being painted with the latter colour. This image was at a deserted camp of the natives, and before going away they had taken all the sheets of bark which they had been using for their own *gunyahs*, or shelters, and laid them over the monster to protect it from rain. There was a cleared space several yards wide all round this animal, where the natives had apparently been dancing corroborees while remaining in the camp adjacent.

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\* *Journ. Roy. Soc. N.S. Wales*, xxviii, 113; *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxiv, 417.

At a corroboree witnessed by Mr. W. T. Wyndham near either the Barwon or Condamine river, Queensland, he saw an image made of earth and logs, which the blacks told him represented the bunyip, warway, or polgun, a water monster.\*

Mr. T. A. Parkhouse, in describing the customs of some native tribes in the neighbourhood of Port Darwin,† states that he was present at a corroboree held in connection with a marriage ceremony. A post was fixed in the ground to which bark was then attached forming the grotesque representation of a man—the whole being painted with red ochre, and surmounted with a conical cap, covered with white down, similar to that worn by the bridegroom. This image was representative of the *biráuel*, or evil spirit.

Mr. E. J. Eyre witnessed a remarkable dance at Moorundie on the Lower Murray river, South Australia, in 1844. The dancers were painted and decorated as usual, and had tufts of feathers on their heads like cockades. Some carried in their hands such tufts tied to the ends of sticks, and others bunches of green boughs. After exercising themselves for some time, they retired, and when they reappeared they were seen 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 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 6 inches long was projected, ending with a thick knob formed of grass, round which a piece of old cloth was tied. This was painted white, and represented the navel. The figure was about 8 feet long, and was evidently intended to symbolize a man. This figure was carried for some time in the dance. Subsequently there appeared in its place two standards made of poles, and borne by two persons. The standards were abandoned, and the men advanced with their spears. Mr. Eyre believed that these dances, and the image, and the standards, had some connection with their

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\* *Journ. Roy. Soc. N.S. Wales*, xxiii, 41.

† *Austn. Assoc. Adv. Sci.* (1895), vi, 642.

superstitions, and that the figure was regarded in the light of a charm.\*

Mr. Edward S. Parker says he has witnessed ceremonies having resemblance to an act of worship, when the blacks have assembled to propitiate *Mindi*, an evil spirit, whose sole business it was to destroy. 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," writes Mr. Parker, "consisting of one large and two small figures, cut in bark and painted, were set up in a secluded spot; 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 ophiphatria, or serpent-worship of India."†

Under date of 1875, the Rev. R. W. Holden speaks of the natives "cutting out an image of a man out of a sheet of bark, and erecting it, and dancing around it."‡

#### CARVINGS ON WOODEN IMPLEMENTS.

The carvings under this heading comprise decorative or symbolical designs cut upon shields, boomerangs, womeras, message sticks, bullroarers, and other articles. As the devices on a large number of native weapons have already been illustrated by different writers in other publications, I shall not at present add a plate representing this kind of native art, but will refer the reader to R. B. Smyth's *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. i, pp. 283-341; E. M. Curr's *Australian Race*, vol. i, pp. 143-151.

MESSAGE STICKS, also known as "stick letters" or "talking sticks," are pieces of wood of different sizes. They are in some cases flat on both sides, ornamented more or less by

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\* *Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia* (1845), vol. ii, pp. 236-238.

† R. B. Smyth's *Aborigines of Victoria* (1878), vol. i, p. 166.

‡ *Folklore, Manners, Customs, etc. of the South Australian Aborigines* (1879), p. 26.

carving, and are painted a bright colour; in other instances they are merely a rounded piece of wood, or a rod cut from the branch of a tree; whilst a still more primitive kind are made of a piece of bark. Instances have been observed where marked pieces of bone are used in a similar manner. They are marked in various ways, consisting of notches, dots, strokes, curves; and also with triangular, quadrilateral and zigzag devices.\* In some of the more elaborately carved there are rude representations of human beings, whilst in some tribes they are not marked at all, but consist merely of a plain piece of wood. "Stick letters" summoning festive gatherings are sometimes decorated with the down of birds, with or without other marks. In some tribes the wood used for making the stick must be of the same totemic division as the sender of the message, and the man who carries it must also belong to the same division. The marks are cut upon them with a piece of sharp stone, bone, or broken shell.

These "talking sticks" appear to have been made according to some conventional design known among the tribes using them. One kind of stick is used for a corroboree where a large number of people assemble; another is used to convey messages or reminders between friends residing at some distance from each other. A certain sort of stick would be used for festive gatherings; another in cases of sickness or death, and so on. These sticks, differing perhaps but little in general appearance, would nevertheless be recognized by the people inhabiting the tract of country in which they were used, and would thus, to a certain extent, have a more or less fixed significance; which would, however, be very much restricted unless accompanied by a verbal explanation by the bearer. The stick is given to the messenger to assist him in remembering the heads of the message, by connecting them with certain pictures, marks, or notches cut upon it, which are explained to him before he sets out on his journey. The stick also serves as his credentials, being a confirmation or guarantee of the genuineness of the message.

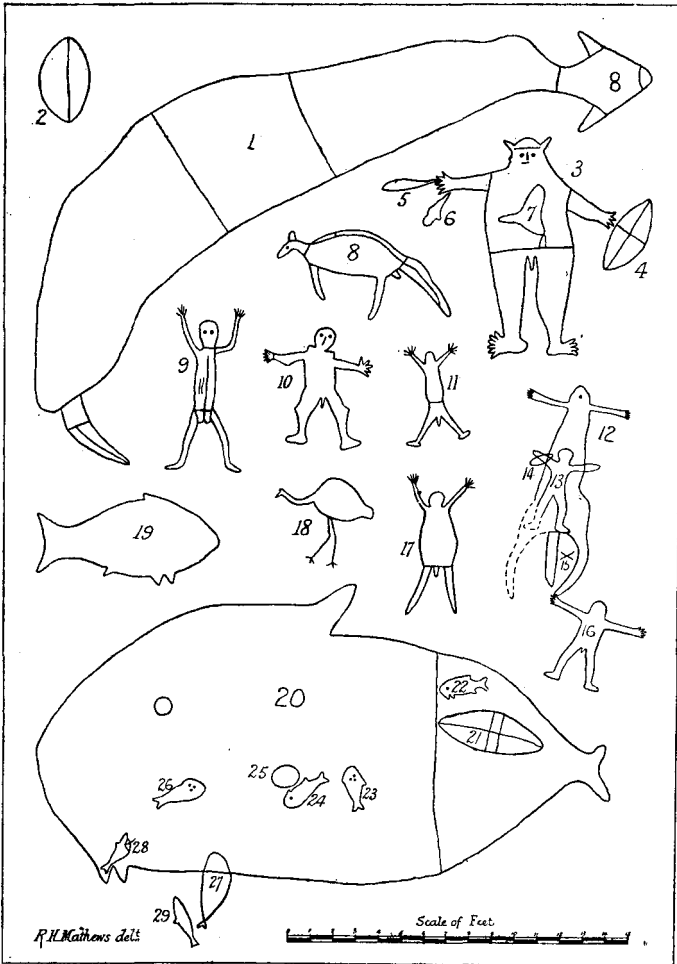
BULLROARERS made of wood, sometimes ornamented by carving on one or both sides, are used at those ceremonies where the boys are inaugurated into the rank of manhood.

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\* For copies of the carvings on seven "message sticks," see my paper on that subject in *The American Anthropologist*, vol. x, Plate VII.



PLATE IX.



ADDITIONAL DRAWINGS BY NATIVES.

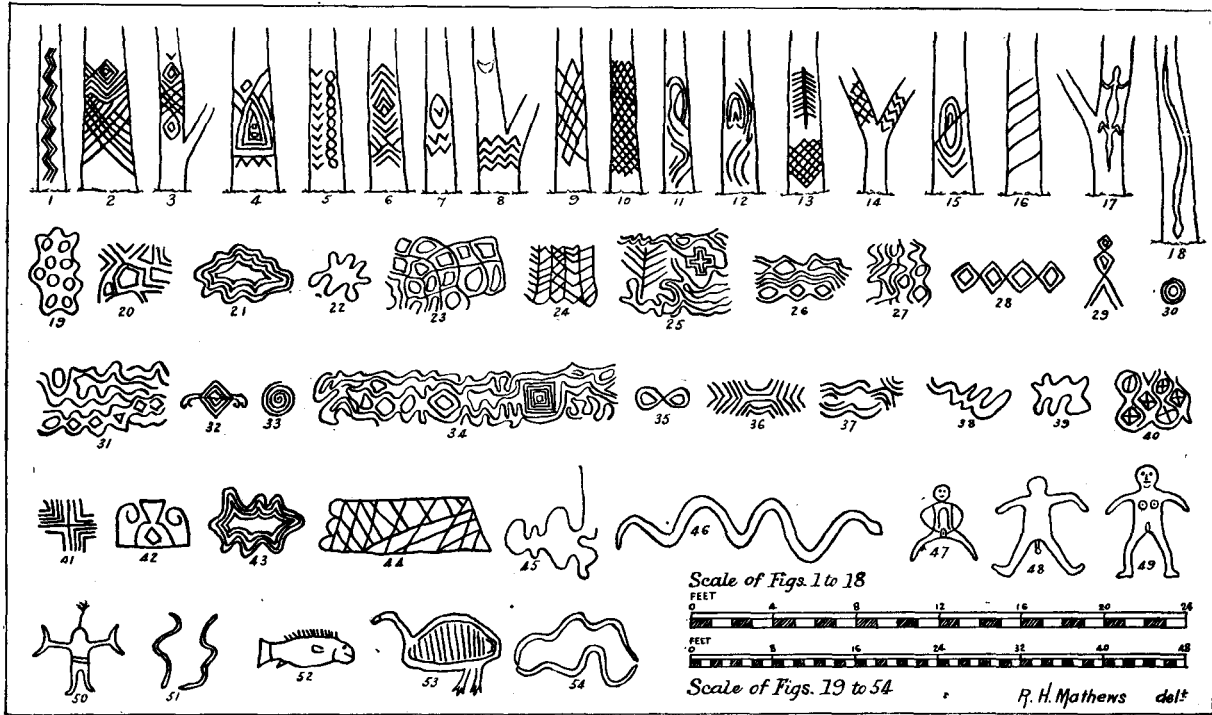


PLATE X.—DRAWINGS BY NATIVES ON THE GROUND.

Having elsewhere given tolerably full descriptions of the bullroarers used by several tribes,\* I shall not occupy any further space in this article. The Rev. Louis Schulze,† referring to the initiatory rites of the tribes on the Upper Finke river, which rises in the McDonnell Ranges, South Australia, states that the *tjurunga*, or bullroarer, in use there is sometimes made of slate, as well as of wood. The natives assert that the bullroarers are not made by the hand of man, thus leaving us to infer that they are produced in some supernatural way. Mr. Schulze also states that during the ceremonies, the men paint their bodies with fish-like figures, and other patterns.

#### DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN.—I am sure we owe a debt to Mr. Mathews for having written this paper, and we are also under a debt to Dr. Walker for having read it.

I suppose the object of a paper of this class is to illustrate two things. First, the nature of aboriginal man and his tendency to art together with his power of illustrating things he has observed. The second object I suppose is to see if we can find out more about the different relationships of mankind. Take, for example, the curious story of these caves, which are almost entirely occupied with pictures of hands. It would seem as if the artist who took these caves as his study went in for a speciality in hands. One would like to know whether, in other parts of the world, anything similar has ever been discovered.

So far as I can see, the different departments of this paper are not much related one to another. The things drawn on trees are of a wholly different character from the things drawn on the walls of the caves, and so with the images inscribed on the ground. There was probably more of imagination than of skill, and that is

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\* "Bullroarers used by the Australian Aborigines," *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxvii, 52-60, Plate VI.

† "The Aborigines of the Upper and Middle Finke River," *Trans. Roy. Soc. South Australia*, xiv, 210-246.

very natural, and it leads us, of course, to the consideration of aboriginal man. He was evidently imaginative, but of an imagination more primitive in its nature, I should suppose, than their skill would be.

The reference to serpent worship towards the end of the paper is very interesting, because we know that there have been in many countries, far distant from one another, tendencies towards serpent worship and so towards the imitation of serpents and reptiles connected with serpents.

Then the "talking sticks" remind us of the North American Indians, who have samples of peculiar language, sometimes on sticks and sometimes on slugs of wood. We would like to know the relative dates of these different classes of objects and works of art.

I was rather surprised to see that Mr. Mathews had had a conversation with the native artist, the very person who apparently had produced some of these objects. We should like to know a little more about the date and the object which led the various persons to make those things—whether it was a mere freak or religious superstition, about which there is such uncommon reserve.

The Rev. W. S. LACH-SZYRMA.—With regard to the subject of native art I fancy that it is much higher than one would suppose. The illustrations in Mrs. Langham Parker's book on Folklore are reproductions of native art, and I believe with regard to pictorial representations they are of a much higher stage than one would anticipate—indeed there is a realism, in some of the work which is represented, which certainly is striking. It gives one an idea of Australia in a rough way, and the natives; and being black they are fair representations of them, and they throw a light on the early stages of culture which even the people of Britain must have passed through. But the confusion of ideas of animals and men is remarkable. In some of their stories you hardly know whether they are referring to men, women or animals. In some of their sentences the idea seems to be rather confused, and I suppose is taken from the transmigration of souls and of metamorphoses and such expressions of thought as we find in the *Arabian Nights* and the transmigration into animals there represented. The subject of these Australians throws light on the matter, for they are one of the few people

existing on earth, at the end of the nineteenth century, who are really in that state in which we suppose Europeans were, probably, on this island, say a thousand years before Christ. The Tasmanians were, I believe, still more antique and belonged to the paleolithic stage. They, of course, have passed away; but the Australians are extremely interesting and still linger on in their early stage.

The Rev. F. A. WALKER, D.D.—There are one or two points which I think are of great interest in this paper.

I fancy it is a moot point whether one nation derives its arts and customs from a distant one, or whether, as human nature is much the same in all places, two nations that cannot communicate with each other have arrived at the same state of civilization.

The talking stick, mentioned by the author of the paper, appears to differ in its use from that adopted in other parts of the world, such as the scytale in Greece, where a cipher was used for writing a message lengthwise on paper. When it was rolled it was unintelligible, the man who received it could decipher the message; but the herald who carried it could not. Therefore there is a slight difference between what he carried and that carried by the Australians; because the messenger in the Australian case had to remember the heads of the message; but the Greek messenger on the contrary could not understand it, and I think in some cases the message was to put to death the man who conveyed the message.

I quite agree with what the Chairman has said—that serpent worship is a relic or observance found not only in many lands but in every land of which we have knowledge, and I do not, therefore, think that the serpent worship of India need only be quoted, for I have seen so many instances of ancient effigies of the serpent in my travels in Italy. Evidently the idea of every race was to propitiate the principle of evil, which idea ultimately gave way to those who possessed the greater and vital power of the Gospel.

Mr. MARTIN ROUSE.—I should like to add, as the trend of the discussion is towards serpent worship, that the kings of Egypt decorated their heads with a serpent, as shown on the monuments. John Paton the missionary, when living in the New Hebrides, was called out one day by a man who said, "I have killed the Tebil!" "What do you mean?" Paton asked. "Matshiktshiki,"

he answered, giving the native name, "the one who does all the mischief in the world, and causes all the wars." He took him round to his hut and showed him a huge sea-snake which he had slain. "That is not the devil," said Paton; but the man maintained that it was the creature which had brought all evil into the world.\*

I do not agree with the speaker (if indeed it is his opinion) who said that these men had risen from a much ruder state. A very remarkable fact was brought to light at the British Association meeting at Oxford in 1894. Mr. Basil H. Thomson, who, while surveying the Fijian island Levuka, had studied its traditions, told the natives' story that their ancestors had come from the west in eight canoes, and that seven out of the eight were lost. The chief of the whole party was however saved; but seeing what had happened in the terrible storm, he exclaimed, "Oh, my writings, my writings! I have lost my writings through that storm; and I am not able to transmit to my children the history of our people." So that nation had once possessed a means of exactly recording events which they had utterly lost when the missionaries reached the island.

In 1893 or '94 Mr. George O'Brien wrote a pamphlet for the Civil Engineers Institution, on the conditions of climate in the desert of Atacama, in the course of which he stated that at a point on the Inca road near to the desert there is a large inscription in Quichra, the language of the ancient people of Peru; whereas the Spanish historians tell us that at the conquest they had no writing; but there stands that great slab with writing upon it.

But just as nations and tribes through degrading superstitions lost the intelligent knowledge of their Creator, so through constant wars did they lose many industrial and refining arts; and the more they moved away from one another into remote islands and peninsulas, while continuing their idolatries and giving free rein to jealousy and revenge, the more completely did they forget true religion and noble handicraft. It used to be said that the Australians had no religion, I daresay that is within the memory of everyone here. That false accusation was utterly dispelled by John Paton of the New Hebrides. When crossing

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\* John J. Paton, ii, 156.

over to Australia he took with him a bag of charms which were worshipped as gods by his islanders. He showed them to the black natives of Australia upon several occasions, and they admitted that they had "gods" like them used by their "doctors." He then twice in the presence of European witnesses bought for a handsome price several gods from an Australian doctor and caused terror to other blacks by showing them.

Numerous witnesses themselves formally narrate these events, one deposition being signed by a Victorian magistrate, Mr. Robert Hood of Hexham. Upon the latter's asking why he had never seen or heard of these things before, the answer came, "Long ago white men laughed at black fellows praying to their idols. Black fellows said, white men never see them again. . . . No white men alive now have seen what you have seen."

Professor LOGAN LOBLEY.—In the Jermyn Street Museum there are some remarkable illustrations of aboriginal art. Along with a portion of the floor of a cave in the south of France there are exhibited bones with the representation of a reindeer, which were therefore contemporaneous with man in that part of Europe, and that reminds us of the Neolithic Period of that part of Europe long years ago.

It is also noteworthy in connection with the paper that all the indigenous animals of Australia are of a very early type, and also the vegetation. We also see now that these have remained practically unchanged for a long period.

The Rev. G. F. WHIDBORNE, M.A.—I should like to say a word upon what has fallen from the last speaker.

We have not any distinct indication as to whether the writer of the paper regards these as recent drawings or old drawings.

It strikes me they must represent a very high state of intellectual advance, and one would like to know whether the present natives can achieve such things, or whether there is any reason to suppose that they are remains of lost civilization. We know that sometimes, even those very old drawings referred to as of the stone age, are really very clever and, perhaps, show us much greater advance in human culture than one is apt to suppose they do. I remember once hearing a lecture, long ago, by a gentleman on the rude drawings of ancient days on bone. The lecturer was a man of high culture, and he not only gave us facsimiles of those rude drawings, but he wanted to illustrate some points in regard to

them; so he got a blackboard and made some drawings of his own, and the drawings of his own were even ruder than those shown us of the stone era.

The CHAIRMAN.—Perhaps I had better now close the meeting. I will only say that I am fully in accord with what has been said by one of the speakers as to the human race. I think man, when he came forth from the hand of his Creator, was by no means in a state quite savage. On the contrary, if he had been a savage I do not think he would have got any further, but I think the essence of humanity of the best type was within him, though his higher powers and the actual thoughts of his mind would be, naturally, developed at a later stage.

The meeting then adjourned.