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The BORA, or INITIATION CEREMONIES of the KAMILAROI TRIBE.
By R. H. MATHEWS, Licensed Surveyor, N.S.W.

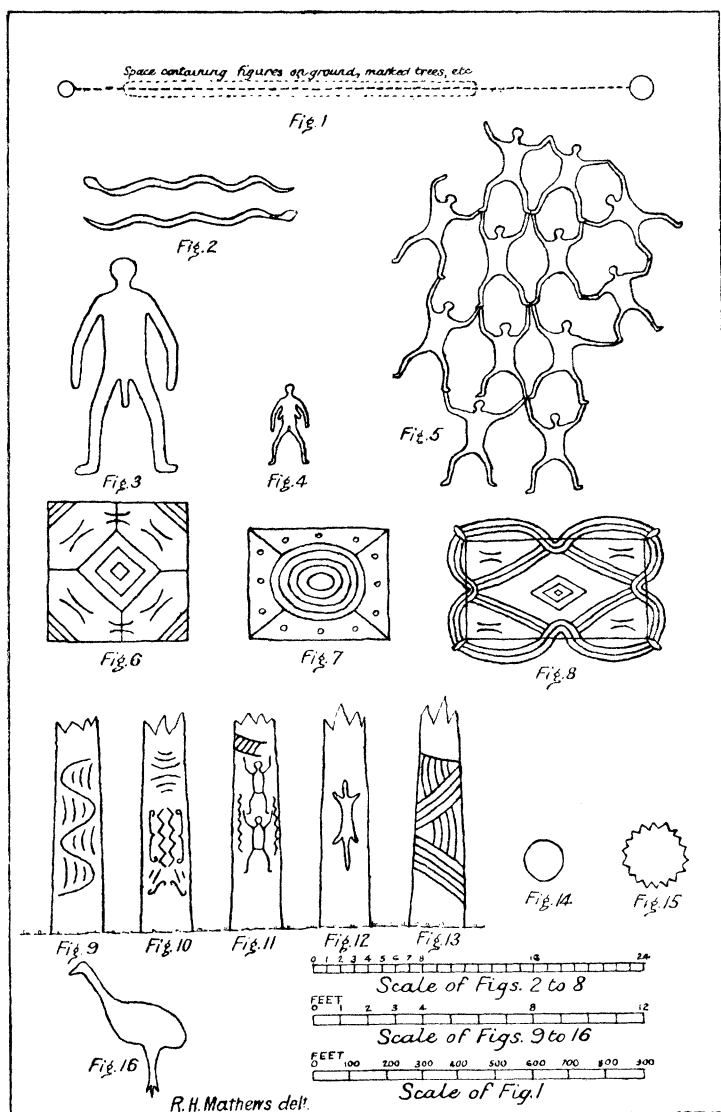
[PLATE XXI.]

WITH the view of assisting in collecting and preserving authentic records of the manners and customs of a race who are now rapidly passing away, I have prepared the following account of a Bora which was held during the months of January, February, and March of the present year, 1894, near the small town of Gundabloui, in the parish of the same name, County of Finch, New South Wales. Gundabloui is on the Moonie River about 12 miles below where it is crossed by the Queensland boundary, and also about 12 miles above its confluence with the Barwan River. All the tribes who took part in these initiation ceremonies belonged to the Kamlaroi community, who occupy a large extent of territory in that part of the country.

Mustering the Tribes.—During the last three months of the year 1891, a Bora was held on the Gnoura Gnoura Creek, about 3 miles north-westerly from Kunopia, a small township on the Booni River, County of Benarba. Not long after the conclusion of this Bora, two of the head-men of the aboriginal tribes of that part of the country, who are known amongst the Europeans as “Billy Whiteman” and “Morgan Billy,” arranged with the head-man of the tribes about Gundabloui, who is known as “Jack Bagot,” that a Bora should be held in the last named district, for the purpose of initiating a number of young-men who could not attend the Kunopia Bora, and also to finally admit some of those who had been there initiated.

The Kunopia head-men gave Jack Bagot three boomerangs, according to custom, as tokens of their concurrence, and in due course he visited all the neighbouring tribes for the purpose of consulting the several head-men about making the necessary arrangements in regard to the best time and place for holding the Bora. These preliminary duties occupied him for a considerable time and on his return to Gundabloui a few months before last Christmas (1893), he despatched messengers¹ to all the places he had recently visited, to inform the blacks that a Bora would be held at Gundabloui, and

¹ These messengers were not required to be of the same class and *totem* as “Jack Bagot,” the principal head-man who summoned the tribes to attend the ceremonies, but were selected according to their fitness to perform the work entrusted to them; and they were sent to the head-man of the different tribes, irrespective of class distinctions.



requiring them to assemble there at a certain time. Some of the messengers were men who had been initiated, and went on their mission alone; but two of the messengers were half-castes who had never been at a Bora, and in their cases each was accompanied by an old man until the first camp was reached, when the old man returned to the camp he had left. From there the messenger was similarly escorted by an old man to the next camp, when he also returned to his own tribe. In this manner these half-castes were conducted from camp to camp until their respective destinations were reached. The initiated messengers, as before stated, went from camp to camp without any convoy.

The messengers went away separately, each having his own route, and before being despatched they were each provided with a kilt of Wallaby skin,¹ as an emblem of their mission, which they had to keep hung in front of them by means of a girdle tied round the waist; and they were instructed to wear this badge all the time they were engaged in this duty. On the first evening of the arrival of one of these messengers at a camp, he would strip quite naked, paint himself with raddle and grease and appear with the kilt of Wallaby skin hanging in front as a covering. He then went through a ceremonial dance before the tribe, after which he delivered his message to the head-man. The same procedure was gone through at every camp visited by him until he reached his final destination. It may be mentioned that the messengers sent out to muster the tribes were considered persons of some importance by the blacks whom they visited. When a messenger at length arrived at the last of the camps he had been directed to summon, he remained with the blacks there until they were ready to accompany him, when the return journey to the Bora ground was commenced, the assemblage being increased by a fresh contingent of natives at each of the places visited by the messenger on his way out. During the journey to the Bora ground, when the contingents camped at night, they sometimes had dances and songs at the camp fire. When this concourse neared the Bora camp, one of the chief men went ahead and informed those already assembled, of the near approach of the visitors, and stating the district they had come from. All the men in that camp were then mustered with their weapons of war in their hands, and on the new comers appearing in sight they were welcomed with volleys of joyous shouts. Then the messenger who had escorted them

¹ Ridley says "the herald who summons the tribes to the Bora bears in his hand a boomerang, and a spear with a padamelon skin hanging upon it."—"Kamilaroi and other Australian Languages," p. 153.

thither, having now finished the task assigned him, was released from further duty. The same course was followed on the arrival of each messenger with his contingent at the main camp. These arrivals generally took place about nightfall, and appeared to have been so arranged. When all the contingents had arrived, the head-men fixed the day on which the ceremonies should commence.

The Camp.—The site selected for the general encampment was situated on some flat ground in an open forest about half-a-mile westerly from the town of Gundabloui. The camp was divided into three sections; the blacks who had come from Mogil Mogil, Collarendabri, and Walgett occupied one section; those from Kunopia, Mungindi, and Welltown another; those from the Moonie and St. George forming a third section. The people who thus went into sections by themselves all belonged to the same tribe; therefore the whole concourse assembled in this camp represented three distinct tribes all belonging to the same community, and each tribe occupied that side of the main camp which faced the direction of their own *tauri*, or country—the camp of the head-man who summoned the tribes being the initial point. Water for camp use was obtained from the Moonie River, about half-a-mile to the eastward of the camp. The blacks from the Moonie, St. George, and Welltown belonged to Queensland; those from Welltown and St. George had the farthest to travel to reach the Bora ground—the distance being over 100 miles. The Narran and Namoi tribes had been invited to participate in the ceremonies, but did not attend.

The people of all ages, assembled to witness this Bora, numbered two hundred and three persons, comprising ninety-six men, fifty-eight women, and forty-nine children. This includes half-castes, the same privileges being accorded to them as to natives of full blood. The Aborigines' Protection Board, on being informed that the Bora was to be held, authorised the issue of rations to the aged blacks and children; and on one occasion, during very wet weather, a special issue of a hundred half rations was made to the able-bodied natives. Mr. J. L. Gwydir, manager of Mr. J. Tyson's Gundabloui Station, close by, gave the blacks an allowance of beef, free of charge, in addition to the Government rations just mentioned.

The Bora Ground.—It is the custom for that section of the community which calls the tribes together, to prepare the ground, and get everything ready for the arrival of the various contingents. The locality chosen for the performance of this rite is usually situated within the country of the head-man

who calls the assembly. While the messengers were away mustering the tribes who were invited to join in the ceremonies "Jack Bagot" and some of the other head-men, assisted by young fellows who had been to at least one Bora before, were employed preparing the ground, which was about half-a-mile westerly from the general encampment, on some level country, in a scrub of sandalwood and coolabah. It will therefore be observed that the Bora ground was in the opposite direction from the main camp to that in which the town of Gundabloui was situated.

Two circles were formed on the ground, very much resembling the rings seen at a circus, only larger (Plate XXI, Fig. 1); these circles were cleared of all timber and grass, and carefully swept; the surface of the ground within them was levelled, and slightly hollowed, so as to obtain sufficient loose earth to form the surrounding walls, which were about a foot high. The largest of these circles which was the one nearest to the general encampment was about 70 feet in diameter, most regular in shape, and in the centre stood a pole about 10 feet high with a bunch of emu's feathers tied on top; in the western wall of this enclosure an opening about 5 feet in extent was left as an entrance. Around this circle on all sides except the opening mentioned, was a bush fence composed of a number of forks set in the ground, with the rails from one to the other, and against these rails bushes were laid. From the opening referred to, an ordinary uncleared bush track ran about S. 60° W. for about 23 chains, connecting with another and smaller circle about 45 feet in diameter. The scrub around the latter circle was denser than at the other one, and it was, besides, farther from the camp and more secluded. This circle was not so perfect in shape as the other, and the walls were roughly made; there was, moreover, no opening left for the purpose of ingress or egress, as in the larger circle, but any one wishing to enter it had to step over the wall of loose earth. Near the centre of this circle were two saplings which had been taken out of the ground by the roots; the branches were then cut level across, after which they were fixed in the ground with their roots upwards. These inverted saplings were for use as seats by the old men when instructing their novices. Although the surrounding country was quite level, one circle was not visible from the other, owing to the dense intervening scrub.

On leaving the larger circle, and proceeding along the pathway, nothing was noticeable for about 140 yards, then, for a distance of about 320 yards, numerous devices and figures were carved in the turf, extending about 20 feet back from the track on either side. In order to obtain a clean, even space on which

to work, the loose surface soil had been removed and piled into little heaps like ant hills, and the earth, cut out in carving the outlines of the figures, was disposed of in the same manner; every heap having a small stick "stuck upright," in the top of it, which had a rather pleasing effect.

The most interesting of these carvings in the soil was a group of twelve persons, life size, with their heads in the direction of the smaller circle, and were on the south side of the pathway. (Plate XXI., Fig. 5.) All the figures were joined together, the hands and feet of one joining the hands and feet of others. These figures were formed by cutting a nick or groove in the ground along the outline of each. They represented the young men who were with Baiamai at his first camp.

A large number of devices, somewhat similar in character to those seen on trees about Bora grounds were outlined by a groove in the soil about 2 inches deep, and from 2 to 3 inches wide, cut out with tomahawks and sharpened sticks. Three of the most representative of these are reproduced on Plate XXI., Figs. 6, 7, 8. There were about 40 of these designs cut in the ground in various places and at irregular intervals throughout the space of 320 yards before-mentioned. Each one had a separate pattern, and some were on one side of the path and some on the other; they are remarkable for their great number and variety. Some of the largest designs were from 10 to 15 feet square, but others were much smaller.

On the northern side of the path was a representation of a horse and parts of a vehicle, outlined by carving in the soil like the preceding; and near a stump which was naturally in that place was the effigy of a black fellow composed of sticks and old clothes, like a scarecrow, having round his neck a string from which was suspended a crescent shaped piece of tin resembling the brass plate sometimes given by Europeans to aboriginal "kings." The native artist who did this group said it was purely imaginary, and was meant as a humorous representation of an old king going to the Bora, and having a breakdown on the road.

The foregoing comprise all the carvings cut in the soil, which I have distinguished from raised earthen figures formed on the surface of the ground, which I will next describe.

About 230 yards from the smaller circle, about 6 feet from the southern side of the path, and at right angles to it, was the horizontal figure of a man 15 feet in length and otherwise built in proportion, composed of logs covered with earth, the height of the chest being $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the ground, and the feet pointing towards the track; this the blacks said represented Baiamai, who presides over the ceremonies of the

Bora. On the opposite side of the path with the feet towards it, was a life-sized female figure which represented Baiamai's female consort whom the blacks call Gunnanbeely. (Plate XXI., Figs. 3 and 4.) They say that Baiamai created them and gave them the country and all that is in it for their use, after which he and Gunnanbeely went away. A short distance from these, on the north side of the track, the figure of a man and woman were formed on the ground in the same manner; they were lying together behind a tree, and were partly hidden. The blacks said these represented their original parents, whom they call *Boobardy* and *Numbardy*,—meaning father and mother respectively.

On the northern side of the pathway was the life-sized figure of an emu formed with raised earth, with its head towards the smaller circle and a spear stuck in its body, the other end of the spear resting against a tree.¹ (Plate XXI., Fig. 16.)

The figures of two snakes,² each 15 feet long, were formed of raised earth; they were lying beside each other, parallel to the track, and on the south side of it, with their heads in contrary directions. (Plate XXI., Fig. 2.) These represent a large snake called by the natives "mungan," and its flesh is preferred to that of other snakes.

The body of a bullock was formed by logs covered with earth, on one end of which was laid a dry skeleton of a bullock's head, with the horns on it; and a stick stuck in the other end for a tail.

There was a mound of earth, 4 feet long representing a grave, on the north side of the pathway. On opening this, it contained some old clothes placed inside a sheet of bark, which was folded round them, and a cord tied outside of it to keep it from opening, showing the way natives are buried.

On the south side of the track was a life-sized male figure cut out of bark, and placed on top of some raised earth about 9 inches high, so as to resemble a man lying on the ground. On the other side of the path, opposite to this, was the figure of a female formed in the same way. These represented the men and women of the tribes.

Not far from the track were three small gunyahs, made of bark, indicating the dwellings of the natives. Two of these were on the southern, and one on the northern side of the path.

¹ The figure of the emu on Bora grounds has been noticed by different writers. See "Journ. Anthropol. Inst." vii., p. 225, *ib.* viii., p. 452 and 456, and Henderson's "Observations on Colonies, New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land," pp. 145-148.

² Henderson says that snakes were delineated on the Bora ground he visited near Wellington in 1832.

At intervals along the track, some being on one side, and some on the other, were sixteen bushes naturally growing there, containing representations of bird's nests, in which were placed stones and prickly pears for eggs. Dispersed along the track in the same manner were half a dozen imitations of caterpillars' nests, made of about a quart of sand tied up in cloths like puddings, and hung on trees, the caterpillars¹ were represented by small leaves of the prickly pear threaded on a string by means of a hole through one end of them, and the string tied round the tree. These nests, the natives say, represent the gifts of Baiamai to them.

A short distance from the image of Baiamai was the imitation of an eagle-hawk's nest² in a tree, 20 feet from the ground. The blacks said there was an eagle-hawk's nest near Baiamai's first home, and that he chased the eagle-hawk away.

Not more than a dozen trees were carved, none being marked higher than a man could reach from the ground. The marks were cut through the bark, and into the wood of the trees. Five of the most representative of these are delineated in Plate XXI., Figs. 9 to 13. I may add that suitable trees for carving were scarce, the timber consisting chiefly of small scrub trees.

On the northern side of the track, near the effigy of the old king, was the figure of an iguana, about 3 feet long, cut out of bark and fastened to a tree. (Plate XXI., Fig. 12.)

A figure of the sun 2 feet in diameter, and one of the moon 18 inches, were cut out of bark, and hung on trees; the sun being at the eastern, and the moon at the western extremity of the symbolical representations I have been describing—perhaps to indicate the sources of illumination by day and night. (Plate XXI., Figs. 15 and 14.)

Not far from the image of the sun were two male figures, cut out of bark, and fixed up against trees, one on each side of the pathway. One of these had his head ornamented with emu's feathers, and the other held in his hand a *hielaman*, or native shield. These figures gave a visitor the impression that they were warriors who had been placed there to guard the entrance to the mystic sylvan temple beyond. The natives said these figures represented the two sons of Baiamai, Cobbarailbah and Byallaburra.

On the track, about 40 yards from the figure of Baiamai, and

¹ Representations of the cockchafer were shown on the Bora ground described by Henderson in the work quoted.

² See Henderson's remarks in his work before quoted in reference to an eagle's eyrie observed on the Bora ground described by him in 1832.

about 270 yards from the smaller circle, was a big fire which was kept burning day and night, called "Baiamai's fire."

From the time the Bora was commenced until the ground was abandoned, two of the old men kept guard over it day and night, they camped at Baiamai's fire, and had dogs to give the alarm if any stranger approached. All the men of the tribes took their turn in watching the ground, and there were always two of them on this duty at the same time.

One of the natives told my informant that the Bora ground represents Baiamai's first camp,¹ the people who were with him while there, and the gifts he presented them with; the figures on the ground and the marked trees are emblematical of the surroundings of such camp. They also state that Baiamai intended the larger circle for the recreation of the women and children; this is why it is greater in extent than the other, which is only intended to accommodate a few.

The Bora ground was ready for more than two months before all the mobs of blacks had mustered, and during this interval the head-men would go and sit around Baiamai's fire and arrange matters of tribal concern, and discuss subjects in connection with the ceremonies which were shortly to take place. Sometimes these discussions would lead to warmth and unpleasantness, but would always terminate amicably. A Bora had never been held on this ground before.

Preliminary Ceremonies.—When at length the last mob of natives had arrived, the ceremonies of the Bora commenced. Every forenoon the initiated blacks went to the Bora ground, and walked about looking at the carvings, and other imagery there displayed, spending some of their time talking about these things near Baiamai's fire, the gins and novices remaining at the main camp. In the afternoon, the mothers of the novices, or their nearest female relatives² who had them in charge, painted them with red ochre and grease, after which they decorated their necks with beads and their hair with feathers. When the novices were thus ornamented, they marched in single file from the main camp to the larger circle, keeping their eyes fixed on the ground. The women who had charge of them—accompanied by the rest of the women in the camp, as well as the children—walked with the novices, watching that they did not raise their eyes from the ground. The mothers, or relatives who had charge of the boys, were naked to the waist and were painted with raddle and pipeclay.

¹ Ridley says "the ground on which the Bora is celebrated is Baiamai's ground." "Kamilaroi and other Australian Languages," p. 141.

² When the mother of the novice is dead, or is unable to be present, it is usual for one of her sisters, own or tribal, who would therefore be the boy's "tribal" mother, to attend and discharge the mother's duty.

On arrival at the large circle, the boys entered it through the opening previously described, and sat down on the raised border of the circle, their feet being within it. The Mogil Mogil, Collarendabri, and Walgett boys sat on the southern side of the entrance to the circle; the Mungindi, Kunopia, and Welltown boys sat in a similar manner on the opposite side of the entrance; and on the left of the last named the boys of the Moonie and St. George tribes took up their position in the same way; the boys of the three tribes thus sitting in that part of the circle which faced their respective districts. As soon as the boys had sat down, the women and children also entered the circle, and commenced to dance, and sing and play. During all this time the boys were required to keep their eyes cast down. About sundown, the men, who had as before stated been at the Bora ground since the forenoon, joined the assemblage at the larger circle, and took part in a short dance. After this, all hands, with the exception of the two men before referred to left to guard the ground, went back to the main camp, the boys being escorted on the return march in the same manner as on their way out. This concluded the ceremonies for the day, and nothing more was done on the Bora ground till the following morning.

At the main camp, during the early part of nearly every night, one of the masters of the ceremonies would go alone into the bush a short distance from the camp, and for about two hours would sound a wooden instrument which these blacks call *murrawan*, which is supposed to represent the voice of Durrumoolan,¹ their native name for the evil spirit, who rules in the night.

During the time the instrument referred to was being sounded in the adjacent forest, the men of the tribes would dance and yell, and make hideous noises; and all the gins would sing and beat time, those of each tribe singing their own peculiar song. The gins sat down in a line on one side of the camp fire, having

¹ Howitt says:—"Daramulun was not everywhere thought to be a malevolent spirit, but he was dreaded as one who could severely punish the trespasses committed against their tribal ordinances. He, it is said, instituted the ceremonies of the initiation of youths; he made the original *mudji*, (bull-roarer) and the noise made by it is the voice of Daramulun."—"Journ. Anthropol. Inst.," xiii., p. 192 and 446.

Wyndham states, that among the blacks of the western parts of New England, the principal man who presided over the Bora personated the devil, and he made a most terrific noise with a bull-roarer. "Journ. Roy. Soc. N S.W.," xxiii., p. 38.

Greenway says:—"Among the Kamilaroi tribes about Bundarra, Turramulan is represented at the Bora by an old man learned in all the laws and traditions, rites and ceremonies, and assumes to be endowed with supernatural powers."—"Journ. Anthropol. Inst.," vii., p. 243.

on their laps a piece of thin, dry bark, with a cloth thrown over it, on which they beat time with both hands. Such of the old men who were too infirm to dance also beat time with two boomerangs, or time sticks, one in each hand. The dancers were on the other side of the fire, retiring into the darkness, or advancing to the light, as the sentiment seemed to require. The various contingents danced alternately, being in turn performers and audience. The uninitiated youths did not take part in these dances, but will be allowed to dance with the men at the next Bora they go to. These performances were gone through for the instruction as well as the amusement of the novices.

Surrendering the boys to the head-men.—The preliminary ceremonies I have been describing were gone through from day to day, with slight variations, for upwards of three weeks. At the end of this time, one morning about sunrise, all the blacks—men, women, and children—assemble adjacent to the larger circle. All the males, including the novices, then stripped naked, and painted their bodies with red ochre and grease. The men then formed into a group and danced in front of the women and children. The mothers of those to be initiated, or their female relatives discharging the parental duty, stood in the front row of the women during this dance, and at its conclusion they commanded the novices to enter the circle, thus relinquishing their authority over them. Up to this time the women retained control of the youths, but now surrendered them to the head-men of the tribes. The youths then walked into the circle through the opening before described, the members of the three tribes keeping by themselves, thus forming three distinct sections within the ring.

Each novice had a guardian assigned him by the head-men or masters of the ceremonies—this guardian being selected from among the initiated men of the class and totem with which the novice was, by the tribal laws, entitled to intermarry.¹

As soon as all the novices were inside the circle, the women and children were made to lie face downwards on the ground on the outside of the ring, on that side of it farthest from the pathway, and their heads were securely covered up with rugs and blankets, to prevent them from seeing what was to take place. Some of the old men were deputed to see that this formality was strictly carried out. When the gins and

¹ Howitt says:—"The novice is taken from among the assembled women by the initiated men of that part of the community to which belong the women as regards whom he has inherited potential marital rights. The men who especially instruct him, and watch over him during the ceremonies, are the brothers,—own or tribal—of those women." "Trans. Aus. Assoc. Adv. Sc.," iii, p. 345.

children were securely covered up, the guardians or sponsors entered the circle, and each caught his novice by the hand, and led him to a convenient place within it, and painted him with pipe-clay, those of each tribe using a distinguishing pattern. The guardians also adorned each of the youths with a kilt of wallaby skin,¹ suspended in front by means of a girdle tied round the waist; and these badges must be kept by the recruits till they have passed through another Bora. Such of the adult males as were not engaged in the ceremonies also entered the circle if they chose, and stood with the people of their respective tribes.

When the novices, who are called *wommarois*, were thus ornamented their guardians took them by the arm above the elbow, and led them towards the smaller circle, with their eyes fixed on the ground, care being taken that they did not look at any of the figures as they passed along the track. Each guardian and his novice walked abreast, one pair following the other, thus forming a file of two and two. Each guardian gave his boy instructions as to his duty while on the Bora ground. When the procession of novices started, the men who were present as spectators raised a shout. This shouting is kept up to cover the noise made by the departing guardians and their novices, the women not being supposed to know what has become of them.²

As soon as the men and novices got out of sight of the larger circle, the women and children were permitted to rise from the prostrate position in which they had been placed and were escorted back to the main camp by the old men left in charge of them. This was the last appearance of the women and children on the Bora ground.

On reaching the smaller circle the *wommarois* were made to lie face downwards on the ground, with their heads resting on the raised earth forming the boundary of the circle, and their feet from it. They were allowed to vary this posture by resting on their knees and elbows, with their heads bent to the ground—when they got tired of one position they could adopt the other—and during all this time they were forbidden to look up.

There were amongst the assemblage a number of young men who had been to one Bora before, and attended this one for further instruction; these are called *tuggabillas*, and had no guardians, but walked unrestrained with the old men all over the Bora ground, and everything on it was fully explained to them, so that when they became old men they may be able to

¹ Sometimes these kilts are made of Kangaroo-rat skin.—“Journ. Anthropol. Inst.” xviii, p. 321.

² “Journ. Anthropol. Inst.,” xiii, p. 442, note 3.

produce similar figures, and explain their meaning to the young men of the tribe, so that their customs and traditions, rites, and ceremonies, may be handed down from one generation to another.

After the *wommarois* had been lying down as stated for about two hours, the *tuggabillas* were brought and placed standing around the outside of the circle. Two old men¹ then entered it, and performed Bora dances, after which the old men each ascended one of the saplings previously described, and sitting on the roots sang traditional Bora songs in a low monotonous chant. These performances continued for about an hour, when the old men came out of the circle, and two of the *tuggabillas* who were considered the most enlightened in the lore of the tribe took their places. The *wommarois* were now allowed to rise, and were placed in a slanting position around the outside of the ring while receiving from the two *tuggabillas* similar instruction to that previously imparted by the old men. When this was concluded, the *wommarois* resumed their former prone position around the circle. The *tuggabillas* then withdrew, and went over the Bora ground again with the old men.

Departure of the boys.—About one o'clock in the afternoon, the head-men and guardians called the catechumens out of the circle, and took them away about 6 miles to a place called Mungaroo. The departure of the men and boys from the smaller circle was the last scene enacted on the Bora ground, which was now finally abandoned. The journey to Mungaroo from the Bora ground was performed at a leisurely walk, during which the novitiates were not allowed to gaze about them, nor to show any levity of manner. As they walked along their guardians were explaining to them the significance of what they had gone through at the smaller circle. On their arrival at Mungaroo, the old men formed a camp on the edge of a scrub near water; and about 150 yards from it in the scrub a separate camp was made for the boys. The latter consisted of a partial enclosure resembling a horse-shoe in shape, the open end being that farthest from the men's camp. The width across the open end was about 30 feet, and the depth from there to the back wall about 20 feet—the walls being about 4 feet high, and were formed of boughs. Across the open end small fires were kept burning, and when in this yard the novitiates were never without a few of their guardians, who furnished them with food, and attended to their wants. Whilst in the yard they were not allowed to look up, but when out hunting or playing with the men they were allowed greater liberty. On

¹ These old men have sometimes been described as "wizards," and their performances have been called "magical dances," and "magical chants."

leaving this yard in the morning, or returning to it in the evening, they had to keep their eyes on the ground while the camp was within view. Women were not permitted to approach either of the camps mentioned.

Many of the men unconnected with the ceremonies accompanied the men and catechumens to Mungaroo, but the women and children, and any of the men who were infirm or did not care to go, remained at the general encampment. These men had to take care that the women did not follow the men and novices, or go upon the sacred parts of the Bora ground. Mungaroo, which is on a warrambool of the same name, is a great place for marsupials, and native game of all sorts. During the day-time the men and youths would strip and paint themselves with raddle and grease, and put on their kilts of wallaby skin and girdles, when they would all go into the bush and hunt. The old men taught the novitiates all the native games, to sing the songs of the tribe, and to dance certain corroborees which neither the gins nor the uninitiated are permitted to learn. They were also instructed in the sacred traditions and lore of the tribe ; to show respect to the old men, and not to interfere with unprotected women.

On some of the days spent at this camp, the men and boys cut grass and reeds, and tied them up so as to resemble kangaroos' tails ; these they stuck in their girdles and danced a corroboree, imitating kangaroos.¹

During the night the courage of the novices was tested by making them lie on the ground in the yard which I have described in charge of some of the men, who were instructed to observe them, while the old men would each take a youth who had been to at least one Bora before, and would thus go in pairs in different directions some distance into the adjacent scrub, where they would make hideous noises, and raise a terrific din, sounding the wooden instrument called *murrawan*, previously referred to ; and during this time the novices were not allowed to exhibit any sign of fear. During the daytime these instruments were hidden away in great secrecy by the old men. These proceedings were gone through every night for about a week, at the end of which the secret wooden instruments (the bull-roarers) were shown to the novices, and their mysterious

¹ At the Bora described by Collins in his "Account of the English Colony of N. S. Wales," pages 365-374, he mentions a dance similar to the one I have described. The blacks told the following legend about Baiamai and his two sons in regard to these tails. They were out hunting one day and caught two kangaroos, and cut their tails off. The next Bora they went to, Baiamai's sons danced with these tails tied behind them like kangaroos, and this custom has been followed by the tribes at all Boras ever since.

significance was fully explained, after which they were placed on the camp fire and burnt.¹

On some days the novitiates would be ranged in a line in the bough yard before described, in front of the old men and those who had lately been admitted as men of the tribe, all of whom would go through many obscene gestures for the purpose of shocking the young fellows; and if the latter had shown the least sign of mirth or frivolity during these performances, they would have been hit over the head with a waddy by an old man appointed to watch them. This pantomimic representation was enacted for the purpose of teaching them to abstain from masturbation, and from those offences which have been called "The abominations of the Cities of the Plain."² During these performances, which took place in the daytime, the men and novices would be naked and painted, and one or two of the men would act as guards or scouts to see that no one came upon them unawares.

The extraction of a front tooth was not practised by any section of the tribes assembled at this Bora, but while at the Mungaroo camp the novices had their hair cut short, and a few of them who had beards had them cut off. The guardians and other men who accompanied them also had their hair and beards cut in a similar manner. The cutting off of the hair was probably intended to take the place of knocking out a front tooth, or the eating of human ordure,³ practised by some tribes at their ceremonies of initiation.

The ceremonies at the camp at Mungaroo occupied between a week and ten days, at the conclusion of which they washed the red paint off their bodies, and painted themselves white, after which they started back to rejoin the main camp at Gundabloui.

Return of the boys.—During the absence of the men and catechumens at Mungaroo, the women and children, assisted by such of the men who remained with them, had shifted the main camp about half a mile southerly from its former position.⁴ About 200 yards westerly from this new camp, a bough yard

¹ Palmer says that "in the Bellinger river tribe, the humming instrument is called *yeemboomul* (bull-roarer), and when the ceremony of the Bora is over they burn it."—"Journ. Anthropol. Inst.," xiii, p. 296.

² "Journ. Anthropol. Inst.," xiii, p. 450.

³ For particulars of this custom, see Ridley's statements in the "Journ. Anthropol. Inst.," vol. vii, p. 252, and in "Kamilaroi and other Australian Languages," p. 154.

⁴ A long and heated discussion took place with regard to locality where the new camp should be erected, and preparations to be made for the reception of the catechumens on their return from the bush. The Mungindi, Kunsia, and Welltown tribes wished to have it erected at Collybidgelah, 17 miles from Gundabloui in the direction of Kunopia, and therefore 17 miles nearer their respec-

was erected, similar in size and shape to the one used by the novitiates during their stay in the bush. The entrance to this yard was on the side farthest from the camp, and faced the direction of Mungaroo. When the men and boys started to return to the main camp one of the men went ahead, and announced that they would shortly arrive. All the children,—and all the gins, with the exception of those next mentioned,—lay down outside of the convex end of the yard, and were covered with bushes by the old men who had remained at the main camp. The mothers, or female guardians, then entered the enclosure, and formed into three groups according to their tribes, each group having a flag¹ of their own, and taking up their position on that side of the enclosure nearest their own district. As soon as they were settled in their places, they were blindfolded by tying handkerchiefs over their eyes and round their heads. When all was ready the messenger above referred to went back and met the men and boys coming from Mungaroo, and they all marched into the bough yard. Each guardian led his catechumen to his mother, or female relative discharging the parental duty, who felt the boy's hands and face till she was satisfied that he was the same person who was handed over to the men at the larger circle on the Bora ground. During this manipulation neither the women nor the boys were allowed to speak. The mothers then had their eyes uncovered, and the boys went through a short dance before them. During this dance the guardians withdrew, and a great smoke² was made by burning green bushes at the entrance to the yard. At the conclusion of the dance the catechumens plunged through the dense smoke, and proceeded with their guardians to a separate camp which had been provided for them about 150 yards southerly from the new camp. They were not allowed to look back at the enclosure which they had just left; and as soon as they were out of sight, the women and children who had been lying down were allowed to rise and join the other women, after which they all returned to the main camp from which they had come. The neophytes and their guardians remained in their own quarters until the tribes finally dispersed, and during this time the former were not allowed to speak to the women or children.³ This seclusion was enforced, lest the young men, while the excitement

tive districts. To have put the camp there would have caused great inconvenience to the other two tribes after the ceremonies were finished, their *taurai* being in the contrary direction. Eventually the arguments of the two latter tribes prevailed, and the new camp was formed in the place above stated.

It is customary in these ceremonies to remove the camp to a new site during the time the men and boys are away.—“Journ. Anthropol. Inst.,” xiii, p. 454.

¹ The use of the flag is probably copied from the “white fellows.”

² “Journ. Anthropol. Inst.,” vii, 252.

³ *Id.*, xiii, p. 455.

of the Bora was fresh upon them might divulge any of the mysteries in which they had been instructed. From what could be gathered from the blacks these novices will be under the surveillance of their guardians for about a couple of months after their return to their own *tawrai*,¹ before they will be allowed to associate with the women of the tribe.

This concluded the whole of the rites in connection with the Bora, and the tribes shortly afterwards dispersed and returned to their own districts. The time actually occupied in the ceremonies proper was about five weeks. The rites conducted on the Bora ground itself commenced about the 12th February and continued till about the 10th of March. The men and novices went away into the bush as stated, and returned to the main camp about the 20th of March. From the time of the arrival of the first mob of blacks at the general encampment till the commencement of the ceremonies upwards of two months intervened, owing to the non-arrival of some of the tribes who had long distances to travel. About four months altogether elapsed from the time of the arrival of the first contingent at the general camp until the final dispersion of the tribes after all the ceremonies of the Bora were concluded.

The number of youths who had never been to a Bora before and attended this one for the purpose of initiation was about twenty, three of whom were half-castes. They were not permitted to see any of the symbolical figures described in previous pages, or to have their significance explained to them. In order to obtain this knowledge they must attend another Bora, when they will be shown all that may be on or around the Bora ground, where they may assemble. Until then, also, they are forbidden to eat certain of the choicest kinds of food; amongst the animals which they are forbidden to eat may be enumerated the cod fish, the porcupine, the yellow iguana, the black iguana, &c.² The ages of these twenty recruits, ran from about twelve to twenty years, but three or four of them, whom circumstances had prevented from attending previous Boras, were between twenty-five and thirty years of age. Besides these there were about twenty-three young men who had been at one Bora previously, and attended this one to be further instructed or admitted as full men of the tribe. As stated before, these young men were allowed to see everything upon the Bora ground, and had all the devices explained to them. Five or six of these were half-castes. It will therefore be seen

¹ Tawrai (pronounced, tow-ry), is the native name for their own district, or tribal territory.

² These animals are probably all *totems*.

that in all about forty-three young men attended the Bora I have been describing.

Many of the blacks who attended this Bora could speak fairly good English, and were able to understand the purport of questions and give suitable replies. Some of them were very intelligent men who could give a clear and progressive account of all that took place. This was a very great advantage to me in collecting my information, because most previous writers have either found that they could not fully understand the blacks, or that the latter could not understand them. Mr. Henderson in his able work before quoted, complains of this disadvantage.

I have endeavoured to give the reader a complete account of all that took place at this Bora from its first inception till the final breaking up of the camp. The manner of summoning the tribes has been explained,—the Bora ground with its imagery and surroundings has been carefully described,—the whole of the ceremonies performed have been particularly detailed. I have imposed this task upon myself in the hope of adding to the scanty literature of a subject which is one of those possessing very great interest to the anthropologist, as well as to the historical and classical student.

A HIGHLY ORNATE "SWORD" from the COBURG PENINSULA, NORTH AUSTRALIA. By R. ETHERIDGE, Jun. (Curator, Australian Museum, Sydney).

[PLATE XXII.]

THE unique example of Aboriginal art now presented to the Institute is from Raffles Bay, Coburg Peninsula. For the loan of the specimen, I am again indebted to Mr. Harry Stockdale, from whose rich collection of North Australian implements and weapons it is taken.

The sword is elongately paddle shaped, slightly convex on one face (the plain), and almost flat on the other (the ornate). It corresponds in shape to one figured by the late Mr. R. B. Smyth, "from the northern parts of Australia," except that it gradually increases in width to the distal end, not diminishing thereto as in Smyth's figure. The total length is 4 feet 6 inches. The immediate proximal end is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and is crescentically excavated or cut out; thence the margins gradually curve inwards towards one another for 16 inches, the weapon hereabouts having an average width of $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and this portion of the sword may, for clearness, be termed the