Roth, Walter E., 1909. North Queensland Ethnography. Bulletin No. 12. On certain initiation ceremonies. *Records of the Australian Museum* 7(3): 166–185, plates l-lvi. [15 January 1909].

doi:10.3853/j.0067-1975.7.1909.960

ISSN 0067-1975

Published by the Australian Museum, Sydney

NORTH QUEENSLAND ETHNOGRAPHY.

Bulletin No. 12.

On Certain Initiation Ceremonies.

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(Plates l.-lvi.; Figs. 9-11.)

Contents.

1. I have been present at initiation ceremonies on the East Coast (Princess Charlotte Bay, McIvor River, etc.), and several[1] in the North-Western Districts; I cannot say that I have been initiated into the latter, for the very good reason that I was not prepared to submit myself to the necessary sexual mutilation, an ordeal to which I am not aware that any European, however keen on Anthropological Science, has hitherto allowed himself to be subjected.

Though various customs, *e.g.*, marriage, scarring, nose-piercing, certain food restrictions, a new name, social rank, etc., may here and there depend upon initiation, very little of a definite nature appears to be known of the why and wherefore of the ceremonies at all, beyond the fact that the prevailing European idea of their having a benificently moral and educational value is erroneous. At Cape Bedford, some of the old men told the Rev. Schwarz[2] and myself that initiation is a matter of custom, and still pre-

[1] For descriptions see Ethnol. Studies, etc., 1897—Sects. 299 to 315.
[2] A gentleman who has lived upwards of 20 years among these people.

served for custom's sake. Others told us, and I am more and more convinced that this is an essential of the *raison d'être* of all these initiation ceremonies, that they were hungry, and had to prevent the younger men and boys from eating those food-stuffs of which they (the old ones) were in want. The old men do their best to carry out this idea by showing the younger generation the influence they wield in executing certain performances, by giving an air of uncanniness and mystery to the proceedings in carrying them out in secret, and by making them believe that any violation of the orders given concerning the eating of certain things will be punished by the infliction of various diseases and deformities. The food-stuffs which are here forbidden include the wokai (*Dioscorea sativa* var. *rotunda*), gangga (*Vitis acetosa*), barwan (a fruit), wátan and bánu (both of them roots), fresh-water eels, a particular variety of turtle, a certain kind of honey, etc. The novitiate must attend two whole ceremonies before being allowed to partake of any of these until finally one of the old men rubs each of these articles successively on his (the novice's) chest. Should he, however, eat of the forbidden fruit within the prescribed period, his face will become disfigured, his nose rot away, etc.—one such example being shown me in proof. Beyond being commanded what not to eat, the novice here receives no instructions whatever concerning his sexual or social relationships,[3] no moral or ethical precepts are inculcated, nor is any form of education (in the ways of hunting, weapon-making, etc.) imparted; indeed, from what I learnt and saw, I should judge that his education, such as it is, is greatly misguided and retarded by attendance at the ceremony. When during the dance connected with the Body-louse (Pl. liv., fig. 1), the actors hunted in the central performer's head and on his genitalia, and ate or pretended to eat the vermin, I naturally concluded that it was a lesson in cleanliness. When, in the poisonous "Stone-fish" dance (Pl lii., fig. 2) a performer accidentally trod, or pretended to tread, on the dorsal fin and yelled out with the pain, the first thought that struck me was that this was a warning to the novices to take extra precautions in the hunting of this particular animal. But I was wrong in both these and similar conclusions, for after every form of enquiry, direct and indirect, I was able to satisfy myself that throughout all these series of performances, not one has any ethical or educational significance—there is not indeed the slightest intention of pointing a moral to adorn a tale. So also on the Bloom-

[3]He may, however, receive such instructions on the Bloomfield River.

field River[4] no moral principles are inculcated during the initiation performances; if anything, the novice is let into a few of the swindles, etc., and the reasons for practising them to his own advantage and self-preservation—at any rate, a marked change comes over the lad about this time, and whereas previously he could be taught and given explanations of certain of the natural phenomena that might be brought under his notice, it is almost futile to attempt doing so subsequently. On the Tully River, apparently the one and only particular object of the performance is the infliction of the belly-scars, without which no man can marry. At Princess Charlotte Bay, throughout all the many weeks that the performances continue, the novice learns nothing special in the way of bush-craft, weapon-making, or any thing else of use to him in the future; all this he picks up as best he can, as opportunity offers. In all cases, however, the novice has two or three virtues inculcated into him, viz., obedience to and respect for his elders, and self-control: with what profit, however, remains to be seen.

It is noteworthy that many of the dances relative to animals and plants which are performed specially at the initiation ceremonies may be re-enacted here and there on occasions of ordinary rejoicing as the common corrobboree, *e.g.*, the Crocodile Dance of the Pennefather River.[5]

2. It is quite possible that subsequent enquiry may show that the various dances representing the antics of the different animals or the growth of certain plants, which as will be seen are throughout Northern Queensland more or less intimately connected with the initiation ceremonies, bear relationship to the Totemic performances described by Messrs. Gillen and Spencer in Central Australia. By Totemism I understand a certain connection between an animal or plant, or group of animals or plants, and an individual or group of individuals respectively, and judged by this standard, the only Totemism discoverable throughout North Queensland is that met with in the animals, etc., forbidden to the different exogamous groups, and to a far less degree to women and children generally, and to the novices temporarily at the initiation ceremonies.[6] But such Totemism as this is explicable, as I have already shown,[7] on the more rational grounds of food-supply, to regulate the proper distribution of the total quantity

[4] According to Mr. R. Hislop, who has spent most of his life there.
[5] Roth—Bull. 4—Sect. 26 (d), pls. xxxiii., xxxiv.
[6] Roth—Bull. xi., part 1. Tabu and other forms of Restriction.
[7] Roth—Ethnol. Studies, etc., 1897—Sect. 71.

of food available. Thus the husband, according to his particular exogamous group, lives on articles of diet different from those of his wife or wives, who of course belong to another group; both of which again are different from those permissible to their resulting offspring who belong to a third group. Hence, to put it shortly, whereas in a European community with a common dietary, the more children there are to feed the less will become the share for the parents, in the North Queensland system the appearance of children will make no appreciable difference in minimising the quantity of food available for those who give them birth. Any scarcity in the total quantity of all the food is met by a change of camping ground, any scarcity of particular diet, or any diet difficult to obtain and capture, being rendered tabu at the expense of the women, younger people, and children. It is noteworthy also that while the four exogamous groups are practically identical throughout North Queensland, the different animals, etc., associated with each group vary in the different districts with local requirements.

Holding these views, I therefore speak of these initiation dances as possibly bearing relationship to Central Australian totemic performances, but what the particular relationship is, there is not at present sufficient evidence to say. Should, however, a connection be ultimately found, the very pertinent question will then arise as to whether the North Queensland initiation dances represent a primitive condition which has become developed into the advanced and intricate ceremonials recorded from the centre of Australia, or whether it is an example of degeneration. The true solution must be sought for in arduous field-work, and not in academic study.

3. It was towards the end of June, 1899, that I witnessed an initiation ceremony amongst the Koko-yimidir-speaking Blacks at a spot on the southern bank of the McIvor River about four miles from its mouth. The presence of a European interpreter with a twenty years' knowledge of the language enabled me to understand the meaning and explanation of everything I saw and wanted to know. This particular ceremony took between four and five weeks to get through; both Cape Bedford, Endeavour, McIvor, and Starcke River Blacks were taking part in it. The food-supply for so large a number of natives, some one hundred and fifty, not being procurable in the immediate locality, a few days' spell was necessitated every now and again to allow of the participants hunting further afield.

The ceremony itself is known as ngan-tcha; this word has the same meaning as ta-bul (= "tabu"), the words being interchange-

able in all cases except when expressing this rite, for which the former term is exclusively used. Considering that at so comparatively short a distance removed as Princess Charlotte Bay there are five or six different and progressive initiation ceremonies, it is interesting to learn that here but one ceremony is known and practised. It is not necessarily held every year, two or three intervening perhaps, and the location is shifted on each occasion. The exact time of year would appear to be immaterial, though usually it is held after the wet season, messengers being sent to neighbouring tribes telling them to assemble; it is also held independently of any particular phase of the moon.

The age at which the novices are chosen to attend the ceremony has nothing whatever to do with puberty; anyone from an old man with children to quite a young lad. The extreme ages of those I myself observed must have been from twenty-two or twenty-three down to eight or nine. They wear no accoutrements, neither are they painted (until the last days' proceedings), nor is any new name applied to any of them individually, nor is silence enforced throughout the whole ceremony. After the performance the late novice is known as a ngumbal.

The performers paint themselves all over with red, with white streaks over and below the eyes meeting on either side of the face in a single line running down either side of the neck, and hence either diverging along each shoulder and arm or continuing down over the chest to join below the navel, or else converging into a single median band. On the head is worn the merrimbal, the cockatoo top-knot feather head-dress, or when this is not obtainable a small bunch or even a single feather may be stuck into the hair. There is no special performer who is leader, chorus-master, etc., all arrangements being made by the old men collectively.

The initial proceedings may be described as follows:—In the morning the novices are seized by the hair of the head and led away from the main camp by the men to a spot selected at some considerable distance away, and left there in charge of a keeper who accompanies them throughout the proceedings. This keeper has no special name applied to him, his duties being to see that his wards eat only of the prescribed foods (a list of those tabu has already been given), see only what is allowed to be seen, and keep within the boundaries limited to them. The men next return to the main camp, where they hold their first performance, that of the Native Companion, which alone the women are permitted to see; the dance of this particular bird invariably constitutes the first of the performances. Subsequently the women

are told, not shown, the boundary of the initiation-ground, this being marked by certain stakes stuck into the earth; should any female even see these boundary-marks, she will get ague,[8] and should she trespass beyond it, will be certain to die.

A more or less circular space is next made (Fig. 9) in the presence of the novices, at any time during daylight, and henceforth all subsequent proceedings take place herein. This space, about fifty feet in its longest diameter, is cleared of stumps, leaves, etc., and the sandy soil levelled as carefully as possible. Near the centre the sand is scooped out and thrown up on either side in the form of a horse-shoe magnet, the arms of such "magnet" pointing to the north; I learnt that this is invariably the position assumed, with regard to the compass, by this central portion. On the eastern side is the low bush-fence wherein the fires burn at night, and the novices with their guardian sleep. The circular space is known as the bó-ral, a word signifying anything level, the central rut as the piri (= river) and its banks as the woln-gur.

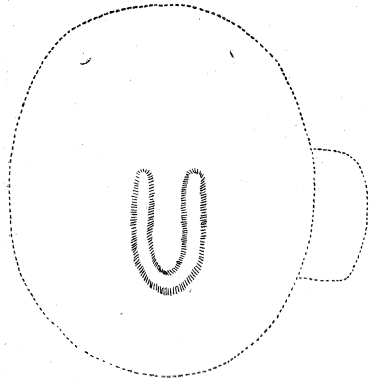


Fig. 9.

The main proceedings commence after the sun is well up and continue until the rising sun is at about an angle of 45° with the horizon, when there is an interval until the afternoon when the sun is in a corresponding position, the performance ceasing with the dark. In the daily interval the majority of the performers go hunting, the movements of the novices with their guardian being confined within a limited area. At night, when various dances take place in the circle, the novices lie in the bush-fence with eyes closed or covered so as not to see what is going on; these dances relate to various night animals and night birds. The essential portion of the ceremony, that indeed which the novices are permitted to watch and have explained to them, takes place during the day-time, and consists of different dances representing various members of the fauna and flora. Some three or

[8] My attack of ague-fever here was in all good faith ascribed by these folks to this cause.

four performers would particularly play the part, all the others circling around in Indian file and playing chorus ; it is the business of the latter to shout in unison, to keep time with the stamping of the feet and the clapping of the hands laterally. The shouting is nearly all "au ! au ! au !" hardly any words being actually spoken, the whole performance being what we should almost call "dumb show." Among the performances so gone through are the dances relative to the native companion (invariably the initial one as already mentioned), owl, pheasant, body-louse (Pl. liv., fig. 1), black palm (Pl. lv.), frog, a certain fresh-water fish, mosquito, crab, honey, kangaroo, dog running after a lizard, fresh-water mussel (Pl. lvi.), stone-fish, alligator, eel, and flying-fox (with the blacks all hanging by their legs from the branches of the trees around), these three coming on just before the snake-dance, which closes the whole rite. As can be imagined, only some two or three of these dances can be performed daily, the more enjoyable ones bearing repetition longer than others. Thus, beyond the change of *répertoire*, the ceremony proceeds from day to day with but slight, if any, variations.

The scene opens daily as follows :—Say the time for the afternoon show has arrived, some of the performers may be resting in the low bush-fence, or elsewhere, outside the boral, when the guardian will bring up his wards from the spot where they have been camped and lead them into the central rut where they squat down one behind the other. The performers next take up their position around the boral (as in Pl. liv., fig. 2, where the low bush-fence can be recognised in the intervals of legs) and circle round the rut same three or four times in Indian file, shouting, stamping, and clapping as they go. When this is over, some of the other performers rush into the cleared area from the northern aspect, each stopping suddenly in front of the novices and pretending to let fly a spear at them, but the latter sit motionless. Leaving their spears in the bush-fence, these late arrivals join the other performers, one of whom drags each novice in turn by the hair of the head out of the rut, which he is not allowed to touch, and leads him to the edge of the circle.

The following are some notes concerning the dances already referred to :—

(*a*) Body-louse (Pl. liv., fig. 1). Here are represented three central figures with some of the others dancing and skipping around. Of the three central ones, the performer on the left is just in the act of putting into his mouth the vermin caught, while he on the right is looking for more, the centre one having his head pulled

about most unmercifully and in all directions during the search. But this is not all, for the last-mentioned individual is next laid on his back, and the search continued in the groin, fork, and on the testicles. As each insect is caught, an extra "au! au!" is given. When no more are discoverable, all three stamp the ground with their knees, raising the elbows and arms as each jump is made, the chorus circling and shouting all the time.

(*b*) The Black-palm(Pl.lv.). In this show, while things are being got ready, the novices, standing on the edge of the boral, are made to turn their backs to it. At the same time certain of the old men cover their eyes and ears to make the mystery doubly sure. In the meantime a large black-palm leaf is brought in from the neighbouring scrub and stuck upright in the centre of the circular area. The novices are now turned round and allowed to see it, when it is shaken about and subsequently torn to pieces, the central figures stamping with their knees, and the chorus shouting and dancing around as before. The novices—one of the little fellows can be distinguished in the plate—are told by the old men that they made the plant grow there where they saw it, and they believe them.

(*c*) The Milkandar (a bird). The central performers on their knees, with arms raised, imitate the sound of the bird towards which they are spasmodically jumping up in order to try and catch it; chorus as before.

(*d*) The Wo-dil (a bird associated with water-lilies) is represented by the central individuals picking up small handfuls of sand and tossing it here and there—the idea of the little tit skipping from flower to flower.

(*e*) The Mosquito. In this, which requires some little time for preparation, the performers hide in the surrounding scrub. Some three or four with leafy branches in their hands come rushing out into the ring, jump about in all directions and brush away the imaginary mosquitoes from off their bodies, heads, thighs and legs. They are soon joined by the singers, and again a repetition of chorus, stamping and clapping.

(*f*) The Crab. The novices, as in the Black-palm ceremony, have their backs turned, some Grevillea nuts being, in the meantime, brought from their hiding-place behind a neighbouring tree, and hidden in the circular area. The novices on turning round see one of the performers on a neighbouring branch beckoning to two others in the far distance to come up as the fire is ready, and only waiting for the crabs to be roasted. These two then advance, and amid great excitement will find crab (*i.e.*, Grevillea

nut) after crab, the chorus yelling extra strong as each is discovered.

(*g*) The Dornorn (poison "stone-fish,"[9] well known to the Cooktown Europeans) is very dangerous in that a stab from its dorsal fin can produce a very ugly poisonous wound. While the backs of the novices are turned, a *bees-wax model of such a fish* (Pl. lii., fig. 2) is placed, but left visible, in the ring. On being allowed to gaze upon the boral again, they see the chorus circling round and round the three central performers, who, with down-pointed spears, are trying to find it, and pretending to miss it each time. Indeed, so well is the mimicking carried on that finally one of the central figures treads upon the model and, seemingly poisoned, utters an unearthly yell, in which of course the dancing chorus join, and falls to the ground in agony.

(*h*) The Fresh-water Mussel (Pl. lvi.). Here again the credulity of the novices is imposed upon, for while they are made to turn their backs and have their eyes closed, several live shells are planted within the central rut or piri. When allowed to see, there is one performer sitting on the bend of the horse-shoe with his legs inside, and holding an empty palm-scale trough in his hands. On either side of him, and sitting on the edge of the rut, is another performer, each taking his turn at diving into the supposed water. After many contortions, standing on his head even, and legs outstretched, amid the cries of the chorus, he comes up to the imaginary surface with a shell, and, accompanied with much yelling and rejoicing, hands it to the other "diver," who places it in the trough. The photo. from which the illustration is prepared has just caught the one man putting the shell in the trough, and the other cocking up his leg to make ready for another dive. The realism may be carried still further by the divers pretending to get their fingers nipped, or else sitting on the banks of the rut and shivering with the cold after having been in the water so long.

Thus day after day, morning and afternoon, the performances follow each other in rapid succession, the final proceedings being constituted as follows:—When the last dance is over, the central horse-shoe is obliterated, and the whole surface rendered level by all the performers, with spears down, gradually converging from the circumference and stamping as they get to the centre. A "murla" is then placed in the ground where the bend of the horse-shoe originally was; the word murla means honey, and is applied to the object intended to represent a honey-comb, the

[9] *Synancydium horridum*, Linn. (*Ed.*).

hollow log indicating the hollow trunk or limb of the tree, while the two beeswax funnels are supposed to be the lipped openings whereby the bees enter. It is placed in the ground as shown in the diagram (Fig. 10), and renders the area tabu;[10] all have to

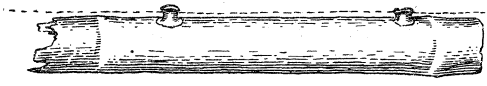


Fig. 10.

tread upon it as they pass over it. The novices are next entirely covered with red paint (but wearing no cockatoo top-knot head-dress) and taken down in procession to the main camp; here each one, while held by an old man at the side, is beaten on the calves with wet bushes by his youngest group-mother, and then goes into hiding. They ultimately return, join in the dancing with the men and women, and sleep in the main camp that night. Next day the novices are covered with bushes and led to another and smaller cleared circular space (unconnected by any alley-way with the original one) where they are hidden under a heap of bushes, and where the wrestling contests take place in the presence of the women. So as to prevent any quarrelling, brothers as a rule are made to wrestle with each other, though the participants may have to be separated by relatives intervening with raised hands. Here the novices stay all night, and during the course of the next few mornings get painted with white streaks, one above and below the eyes, joining at the outer angles, continued down each side of the neck, and so over the trunk on to the front of each thigh. They are then told to lie down and go to sleep, which they pretend to do by lying perfectly still on their backs with eyes closed. Each one is next suddenly "awakened" by a sharp pinch on the arm and told that he has been snake-bitten, at which he commences to be frightened, and then starts crying. His old mentor then proceeds to kill the imaginary snake by means of a small variety of bull-roarer which he whirls through the air in various directions, such action being believed to prevent the bite having a fatal effect. This bull-roarer is now given to the novice, who then has the power not only to kill snakes but even people by its agency; it is called dunggul, a term also meaning a snake. Two or three days later the snake dance is ended by the novices being shown a

[10] I had already met with these murla on initiation grounds on the Starcke River and on the Bloomfield River; the specimen from the latter locality is, however, solid.

huge representation of a carpet snake fixed on a tree, and the ceremony is completed.

No personal ornaments are worn significatory of having undergone the rite, this being only known by the man's word or by public report. Women go through no ceremonial.

4. On the Bloomfield River, when a sufficient number of friendlies can be got together in one locality, and this will depend upon a suitable season and adequate food-supply, all the boys who are to undergo the rite are taken to a spot well removed from the women and the actual camp, to where a "lean-to" of branches is set up. About ten or fifteen yards distant from this shed is the initiation ring, an oval space about twelve yards by six, formed in some sandy spot, the sand scooped out, and thrown up to form a raised edge just wide enough for one individual to walk along on. At the lean-to each boy is covered from head to foot with Grevillea-bark charcoal by his father or mother's brother, the ashes being applied with the hands, which are spat upon. The proceedings will commence at any time during the day or evening. The boys are now taken to the cleared space within sight or sound of which no woman or other uninitiated males dare to be present. Here the elders go through a whole series of dances or performances relative to various birds and animals, and as each is executed the father or mother's brother explains to his ward the meaning and details of it; at the commencement of each separate dance, except that of the wild-cat, during the whole course of which their faces are turned aside in the direction of "home," they are directed to look homewards while things are being got ready. These dances are done in relays and extend over a space of sometimes four days, without sleep and but little food, and that only of a certain kind, with the result that the poor novices are pretty well half-starved and knocked-up for want of sleep. The novices are also painted differently at the close of the ceremony, with red ochre, to what they were at the opening. As soon as the elders have decided that they have had enough of it, the men in charge of the boys will collect some leafy boughs under cover of which, just like a moving forest, they all march back towards the original camp. Before reaching it, however, they stop at another cleared more or less circular space with its accompanying lean-to shed, and stand up in two rows, the novices forming the front one. The mothers (blood- or group-) of the initiated youths are now allowed to approach, each woman coming close up with a leafy bough which she switches lightly across the thighs of her own particular boy, who thereupon enters the lean-to, where he has a short rest. Having so rested a while,

the snake dance is performed in this smaller cleared space, this being followed by the wrestling matches. At last they all return to the original encampment, where the novices now occupy the bachelors' quarters. Some time subsequently, depending upon the season, etc., the young fellow commences to eat certain of the foods that have previously been forbidden him, the first that he is allowed to partake of being the wo-kai yam (*Dioscorea*, sp.), the last, many months later, being the scrub-hen's eggs. None of these food-stuffs, however, is he allowed to speak of by their right name; to specialise—he must generalise them all as bandil-maja. Furthermore, during all this period that he is being allowed to gradually partake of more and more of the various foods which had hitherto been forbidden him, all women and any uninitiated males are strictly to avoid, touch, etc., anything that he has eaten from or drunk of. At length he gets his nose pierced by an individual known as the pi-wal (who is sometimes a woman), one being appointed to each novice, whose duty it is to acquaint him with the relationship, etc., that he now bears to other members of the tribe; from this time onwards the young man never speaks by name either to or of his pi-wal unless by chance there happens to be some blood-feud springing up between them. It is only subsequently to the initiation that the young men are taught the use of the bull-roarers. Females go through none of these initiation rites; men need not necessarily have gone through it, even before marriage or even before children have been born to them.

5. On the Lower Tully River there is no name attached to the ceremony which is carried out for boys alone, and apparently with one particular object only—the infliction of the belly-scars. No women, and no young boys who have not already been initiated, are allowed to be present. Several youths may be initiated at the same time, from one up to five or six. They are informed of it a week or so beforehand, as also are a few of the gins who are told-off to prepare large quantities of a particular food-stuff, the "bara" nut. The boys are about seventeen or eighteen years of age, when the moustache is developed, when they are considered ready for the rite. The ceremony lasts from four to five days, but does not take place at any particular time of the year; it is usually gone through in the neighbourhood of a river-bank, but not necessarily always in the same spot. No special dresses, ornaments, etc., for either the men or the young boys, and no special implement beyond flint-flake, are brought into requisition; the novice's name is not changed, nor is anything special taught him All who have undergone the ceremony

have the same social rights in that, as soon as the scars are healed, they are "men," and can have wives.

After having been crammed with the bara nut, their bellies distended, and the incisions made, the novices next get up and go inside a hut specially reserved for them, a very big grass one, and there they stay by themselves. The same food, which the women have prepared for them, is brought here by the men, with whom only, besides amongst themselves, are they allowed to speak. They may walk about in the close neighbourhood, but must wear the bark blanket around them when the gins may see them thus covered, but from a distance only. This goes on for two or three days, during which period certain of the elder men go hunting for eels. At the end of this time, the novices are taken to some isolated spot away from their camp, and while their attention is purposely diverted to something else, another old man will suddenly jump into view and frighten them. The latter generally appears from behind, holds the cooked eels in front of him, and then divides them amongst the lads, who eat them, rubbing the fat over their bellies. After the eating of these fish, the kokai-kokai (as the boy is called after he receives his chest-mark) becomes a ngu-tcha. He still remains within, or in the neighbourhood of, the special grass-hut for another day or two, during which period the elder men prepare the kumbi (*Colocasia macrorrhiza*) root and frighten him with it as was done in the case of the eels. Some four or five days after the commencement of the ceremony, the scars begin to heal, and the youth is called a mulari, when he may be seen by the others as well as by the women. A few weeks later the scars are quite healed and raised, and he is called a chalma, a "man," when he is allowed to marry.

During the whole ceremony, the novice only partakes of the eels and the *Colocasia*, everything else being forbidden him, but when it is over the restriction is removed and he can eat anything he chooses.

6. In the hinterland of Princess Charlotte Bay, amongst the Koko-warra and Koko-rarmul, where I watched the initiation proceedings during November, 1898, the first takes place during the latter months of the dry season, after the lad has arrived at early puberty. He is caught up from amongst his mates in camp and taken by force, notwithstanding his own screams and his mother's entreaties, to a cleared circular space, the name of which (KWA. bo-ata, KRA. barta) gives the name to the first of the series of rites which take place here. This space is about twenty to twenty-four feet diameter with the edges all raised except that portion of it facing the north, where there is a sort

of entrance-way; there are no marked trees or distinctive signs anywhere around. The novice, in company with others in the same predicament, is made to sit at a fire on the eastern side of the space, at some distance removed, and from here he watches the elder men taking part in the performance, though he is not permitted to witness them actually dressing themselves, their sole decorations consisting of the cockatoo feather head-dress and a streak of white paint on face and trunk (Pl. lii., fig. 1) with sometimes another or two put on the thighs of the leaders. Dancing commences at sunrise to continue until about breakfast-time, and starts again when the sun is getting low until sunset. It consists of a representation at each performance of the antics and movements peculiar to the following animals, and many others, *e.g.*, native-companion, mopoke, eagle-hawk, sparrow-hawk, owl, frog, iguana, dead blackfellow, whistler-duck (all in this particular order), etc. That relative to the native-companion always comes first. It is said that a very long time ago this bird found a ground-chili, and not knowing what it then was, ate it, with the result that not only did his head and beak take on a scarlet colour, but that he got all hot and "all-same drunk"; and that it was during this predicament that he learnt his steps which he subsequently taught to all the other animals and birds in the order mentioned, each finally coming to have a special one of its own. These performances are repeated almost daily until the commencement of the wet season, when the dancing, instead of ceasing at sunset, continues all night until sunrise, the pre-prandial one being at the same time discontinued. All this time the novices do not approach anywhere near the general camp, or the women, but are tended night and day by one of the elder men who take on this duty turn and turn about. They are permitted certain foods only and forbidden others; among the former are dugong, kangaroo, opossum, lily-roots and seed, *Vitis trifolia* root, and (big-bee) honey, while the latter include yams, (small-bee) honey, eel, stingaree, turtle, big mullet or any other big fish, red bream, and anything else red. They also learn and have to avoid the animals belonging to their own exogamous group. The names of all these forbidden things must not be mentioned by them, although they may be indicated by signs; any transgression in this respect would be followed by disease. They also regularly practise the various dances they see performed, especially those peculiar to their own particular group, but they do this well away from the circular space, which they are strictly forbidden to enter; they are also told all the places and things that are tabu. When at last the ceremony is over, with the commencing wet season, they return to the general camp, but dare not mention anything they have seen or heard to either their mothers, sisters,

or any females whatever. In the following season when the next bo-ata ceremony takes place, the novice is allowed to enter the cleared space with his decorations, and join in the dancing along with the other performers. After he has thus twice, *i.e.*, during two seasons, taken an active part in the actual dance within the precincts of the bo-ata ring he is led up before one of the very old men who rubs his (the novice's) chest and stomach with each of the different food-stuffs so long forbidden, which he successively places in the younger man's hand, as a sign of their being now permitted him. Having completed this initiation, the novice is a bárnbata, can speak by name of all these food-stuffs to his fellow-men, and is now allowed to marry.

The Koko-warra here have six initiation ceremonies through which an individual, if he is anxious to reach the top rung of the social ladder, has progressively to pass. Taking them in their proper order, they are the bo-ata, urr-dú, gaun-darang, andén, alkír, and alkán-jinna. As an individual passes the first three, he is known successively as a bárnbata, karkánta, and alpó-anna. The neighbouring Koko-rarmul Tribe have only four rites, the barta, antára, an-pí, and an-púl, an individual passing the first two being called first a barn-batang, and then an antárntang.

I was witness to portion of the alkir or fifth Koko-warra initiation ceremony, which I was informed was a replica of what had been going on daily for some six or seven weeks previously. For

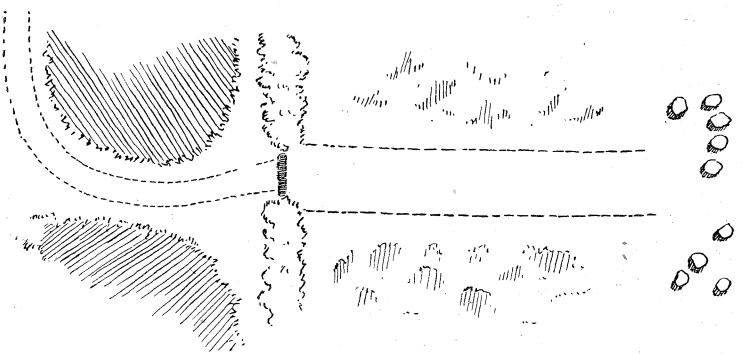


Fig. 11.

this rite a special piece of ground known as the rau-rár (KWA.) was laid off; this consists of a broad path separated from a narrow one by a screen, an arrangement which in diagram would appear something like Fig. 11. The broader pathway, cleared of timber, leaves and rubbish, which thus constitute the slightly

raised edges, is about twenty feet wide, and well over one hundred and fifty feet long, forming a fine sandy tract leading straight from the main camping-ground to the screen. The latter, or aréria (KWA. term signifying any fence in general, *e.g.*, a fish-trap one) is about five feet six inches high formed of switches tied at their upper ends on to a cross-piece which in turn is maintained in position at either extremity by resting in the fork formed of two slanting uprights. This structure is shown in the centre of the Pl. liii., fig. 1, taken at a spot about half-way down the broad track, a portion of which is distinguishable in front. On either side of it is an artificial bush-fence which, with the screen, thus together shut off from observation from the main-camp side anything which is taking place beyond. No one, except the actual participants and novices for the particular rite, are allowed to come, or even to look, behind the screen; the whole of the initiation ground is of course tabu from the women. On the further side, the narrower pathway leads a sinuous course into a patch of dense scrub where in a secluded spot the dressing and decoration of the principal characters take place.

The "orchestra" take up their places just behind the screen, the musical accompaniment of the song consisting of a length of hollow log, split in half, with the concavity turned downwards; upon its convexity some five or six individuals were hammering away, and keeping good time, with their sticks, a splendid-toned reverberation being thus produced. Plate liii., fig. 4, shows these musicians *in situ*, four of them squatting on one side of the log and three on the other; the sticks are in evidence. To the left of them are three figures standing upright, these are smeared from top to toe with charcoal-grease, which gives them quite a shiny appearance, and are known as the crows. It is they who help to dress and decorate the two principal individuals to be immediately described, and hence may be quite correctly described as "dressers." On the extreme right of the picture can be just recognised the horizontal cross-piece on to which the switches and light leafy saplings constituting the screen are tied. In the very centre is the fire, which is of course required considering that the ceremony only commences when the sun begins to set. The main figures actually distinctive of the ceremony are also shown in Pl. liii., fig. 3, representing the Amboiba,[11] individuals who,

[11]Similarly masked and dressed figures (Pl. l., figs. 13-14) known as Amboipo, are met with in the initiation ceremonies further north, *e.g.*, Margaret Bay, where the decorations of the performers are even more elaborate (Pl. li.).

in days gone by, are believed to have driven the Blacks on their different peregrinations. They are covered with strips of tea-tree bark, each from two and a half to three feet in length, fixed into a top-string or rather rope so as to form what may be described as a huge "corner-fringe" (the upholsterer's term) quite nine or ten yards long. Starting at the waist, this fringe is wound round and round the individual from below up over his arms and covering him, except for the face, in his entirety. Over the face is worn a mask, formed of an oblong piece of tea-tree bark, on which is painted a red cross over a white back-ground; two eye-holes are inserted in the horizontal limb of the cross. The mask is kept in position by means of three finely pointed small spears upon which, here and there, some blobs of feather-down are stuck; these bits of down can be recognised as the white spots above the mask on the right-hand figure. The spears themselves, the alkir, have some important signification, and give the name to this particular rite. At another stage of the proceedings (Pl. liii., fig. 2) the Amboiba assumes a kneeling position, his face uncovered and the mask fixed in between the spears over his head; he thus remains immovable for some considerable time, while certain explanations and injunctions are given to the novice by a third party, for an Amboiba never speaks. While the latter's faces are uncovered, and only so long as this lasts, a hand is placed over the novice's eyes, so that he should see nothing of the change being made in the accoutrements by the crows. The special injunctions given to the novice are that for the whole of the coming season (*i.e.*, practically a twelvemonth), the shortest time before which an opportunity can prevent itself for his taking the sixth or final degree, he must not give either to his own, or any other, women, or his children, any (small-bee) honey, eels, large iguana, barramundi, or red bream. Should he happen to catch any of these animals, etc., on his travels, and not require them for himself, he must give them to the elder men only. On the other hand, supposing the women can obtain any of these things through their own personal exertions, which is almost impossible for them to do, they are allowed to eat them provided they do not happen to be tabu to them individually.

When the change of dress had been made, and the novices taken away, the dressers unwound the tea-tree bark from the Amboiba, a signal that the main portion of the ceremony had come to a close. The sun had now set well below the horizon, the enveloping darkness was becoming very pronounced, and soon the further side of the screen was deserted, the participants and myself returning to the main camp.

After the evening meal was over, the two Amboiba were again dressed up with their masks, etc., in the scrub on the further side of the screen, but on this occasion they advanced to the open end of the broad alley-way where the orchestra had already taken up their places. The women and children were thus allowed an opportunity of looking at them, and they joined in clapping hands to keep the time. A youngish looking lad was next seized, and his eyes covered; he was firmly held in his captor's grip while the two Amboiba purposely and forcibly dug into him their elbows and shoulders from under their crinkled tresses. Instead of advancing now with the dancing, the two central figures retired a few paces towards the screen (with the masks all the time turned towards the main camp) and then rested; the orchestra shifted their positions during the interval, at the same time that the boy was again knocked about. This kind of music and dancing, with alternate retiring and resting, continued all the way back to the screen, and when about half-way down the alley-way the women and children were sent about their business back to camp The boy must have been somewhat badly bruised, considering the time taken, at least three-quarters of an hour, to cover the length of alley-way, and the number of times, corresponding with the intervals, that he must have been knocked about. He was never allowed to see what was actually taking place, for when he was at last permitted to free his eyes, upon arrival at the screen, the Amboiba had disappeared behind it. I learnt subsequently that this particular lad was completing his noviceship in some ceremony earlier than the present alkir or fifth rite, and that it was only during the few final nights of the latter that this "bruising" business took place. It must be remembered that up in these districts several of the initiation rites may be going on all more or less at one and the same time.

7. In the Rockhampton District[12] when the old men consider that there are enough young men, of the age of puberty, to be operated upon, they call all the tribe together, stating publicly that they will have a big dance. Word is soon passed round, and certain men who have been previously agreed upon each catch such a young boy. These certain men belong to that particular exogamous group whence the novice will eventually take his wife, and so their relationship to the boys may be spoken of as that of brothers-in-law or nu-pa. Each nu-pa tells his novice what to do during the whole time, something like three months, that he is being initiated. Having thus all been finally

[12]This is from notes given me by Mr. W. H. Flowers, late of Torilla and Pine Mountain, *via* Rockhampton, 1867-1891.

coll-cted, the young unmarried men take the novices into the bush, while the old men prepare the ground, *i.e.*, make a clearing, leaving neither grass nor stick. In the evening, the women are told to lie down in the camp and keep themselves covered, so that they should see nothing. Fires are lighted round the clearing, and the novices then brought in from the bush, made to sit cross-legged in the middle, and told not to look up at whatever is being said or done, but just simply to beat the ground in front of them and look only at the spot they are beating. The other Blacks then wrestle, carry on various dances, and make noises suddenly here and there, and all round about, but the novices dare not look up. This goes on until midnight or perhaps later, when the other Blacks have a meal, but only a very little honey is given to the novices, and then only by the nupas. The other Blacks go on to their own camp and sleep, leaving the novices with their guardians within the ring of fires; finally the nupas retire to outside the fiery circle, leaving only their wards within. Next morning the novices with their attendants leave camp before sunrise, and are allowed to hunt, but they may only eat of certain foods, and in addition are kept on very short rations. At sundown, the women and children are again sent to camp, and about dark the novices are brought to the clearing wherein they find some other blacks wrestling and dancing, and walking slowly round the circle of fires look only down on the ground directly in front of them, until such time as they are told to go inside. The nupas do not accompany them now within the cleared space, but advise and explain the various dances to them from the outside, the novices continuing to sit cross-legged and to beat the ground just in front. This goes on daily and regularly for about a month, the novices having very little food or rest, and camping at night within the circle of fires on the bare ground without covering of any sort, though should heavy rain fall in the interval they are allowed, in company with their guardians, to go into the bush and erect a hut in which to camp. During the whole of this month, the women and children never see the novices, who are submitted to various ordeals, in one of which each is held up at full arm's length by his nupa and nupa's tribal brothers for some little period, during which procedure he is not supposed to move a muscle. In the course of the following month the novices are tried still more. The other blacks will make jokes and laugh loudly quite close to them, but the novices must not even smile. At other times, they will shout out something like this—"I say! Some heavy rain is coming! Where's your blanket?"—but the novice must take no notice, and must not show by any sign that he has even heard.

Again, a black will sidle up to a novice and drop a billet of wood, saying, "See the fine fish I caught. Won't we have a big feed to-night!"—a remark rather trying for a young man who for the past two months has been almost on starvation diet. Everything indeed that can be thought of is done to get him to forget himself even for a moment, and make him look up, speak or laugh. When finally the old men consider the novices have been sufficiently tried, they tell the nupas so. That same evening the novices paint themselves up as "men," with feathers in their hair, and cease to be novices any longer. Now for the first time since the ceremonies began are they seen by their mothers and sisters, and as by this time they have become very thin, not only do their relatives in particular, but the whole camp in general, make a great fuss and cry over them. Still even for three or four months later, the newly-made "men" may only eat honey, yams, and "old man opossum" flesh, but they must not gnaw the bones. After this lapse of time they may eat anything except emu-flesh, which must always be brought to the old men in camp, and never eaten by young men at all.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE L.

One of the masked figures, Amboipo, met with in the initiation ceremony at Margaret Bay.

G. W. C PYM, photo.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE LI.

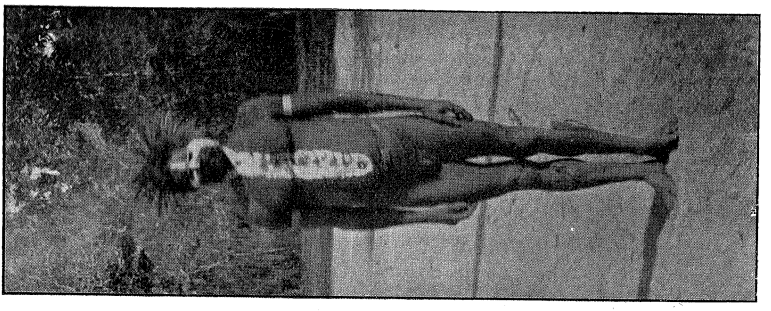
The masked figure Amboipo, in the Giant Kingfisher Dance at Margaret Bay.

G. W. C. PYM, photo.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE LII.

Fig. 1. Form of decoration of one of the performers at the bo-ata in the first series of initiation rites of the Koko-yimidir Blacks in the hinterland of Princess Charlotte Bay.

Fig. 2. Beeswax model of the dornorn or "poison stone-fish" (*Synancydium horridum*, Linn.) used in the dance of that name amongst the Koko-yimidir Blacks at the McIvor River.



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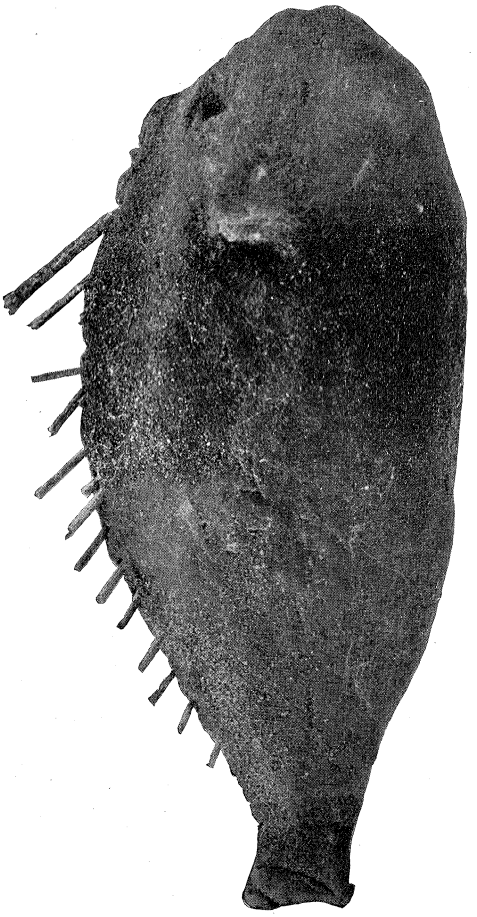

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1. Dr. W. E. ROTH, photo.
2. H. BARNES, Junr., photo, Austr. Mus.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE LIII.

Fig. 1. The screen separating the broad from the narrow paths of the rau-rár in the alkir or fifth initiation ceremony of the Kokowarra Blacks, at Princess Charlotte Bay.

Fig. 2. The two Amboida, the two main performers of the alkar or fifth initiation ceremony of the Kokowarra Blacks at Princess Charlotte Bay, kneeling with faces uncovered.

Fig. 3. The same standing with the faces covered.

Fig. 4. The "orchestra," behind the screen seen in fig. 1, with the three crows or "dressers" standing on the left hand.

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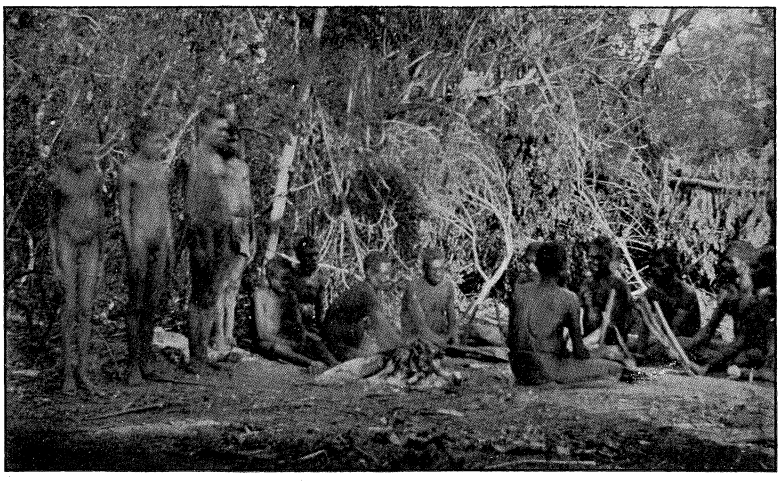
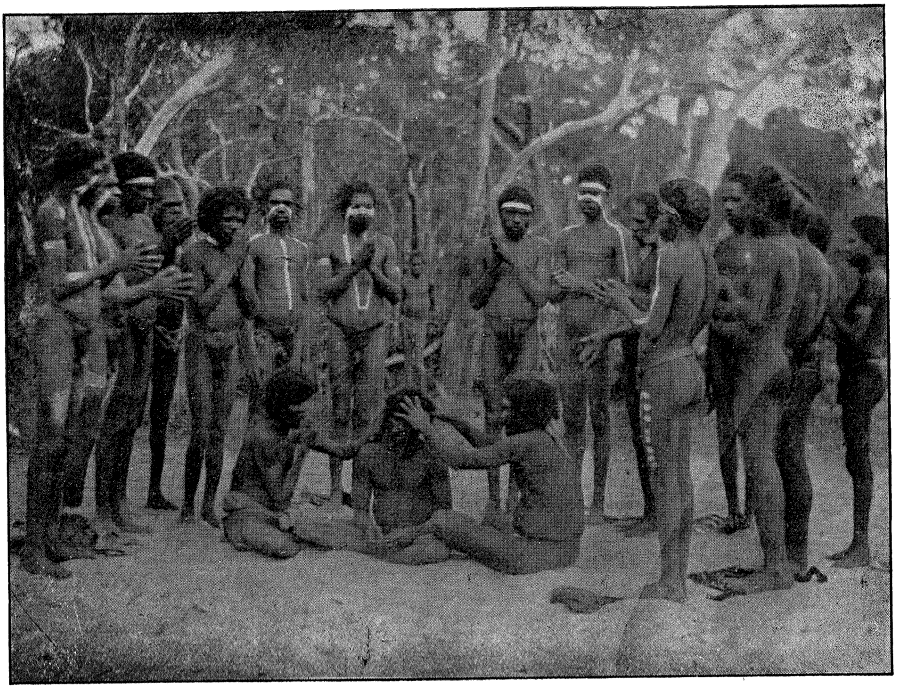


Dr. W. E. ROTH, photo. 4

EXPLANATION OF PLATE LIV.

Fig. 1. Dance of the Body-louse of the Koko-yimidir Blacks at the McIvor River.

Fig. 2. Each day's opening scene of the Koko-yimidir initiation ceremonies with the performers standing around the bo-nal, or circular space of the initiation ground, and the initiates in the piri, or central rut.



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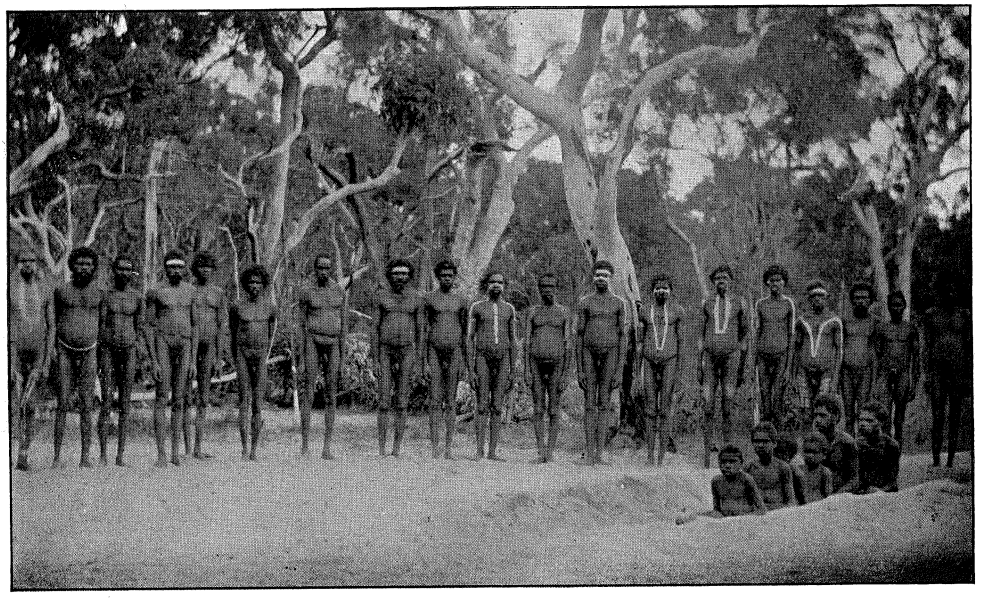

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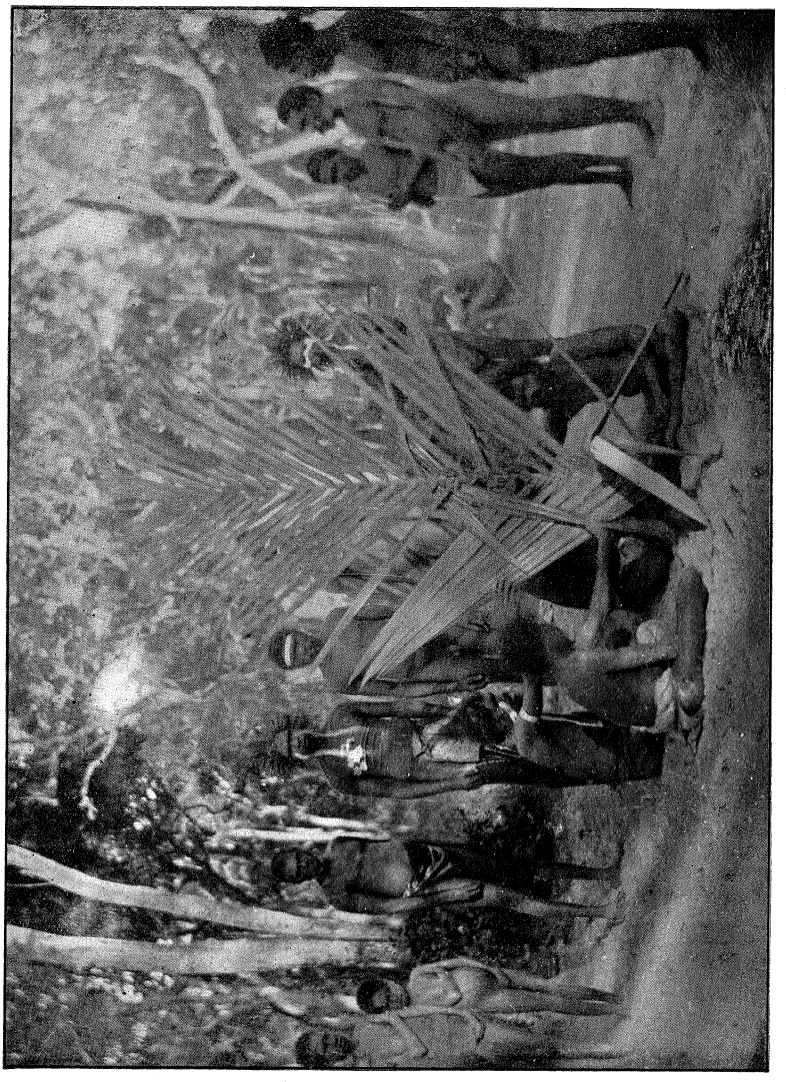
Dr. W. E. ROTH, photo.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE LV.

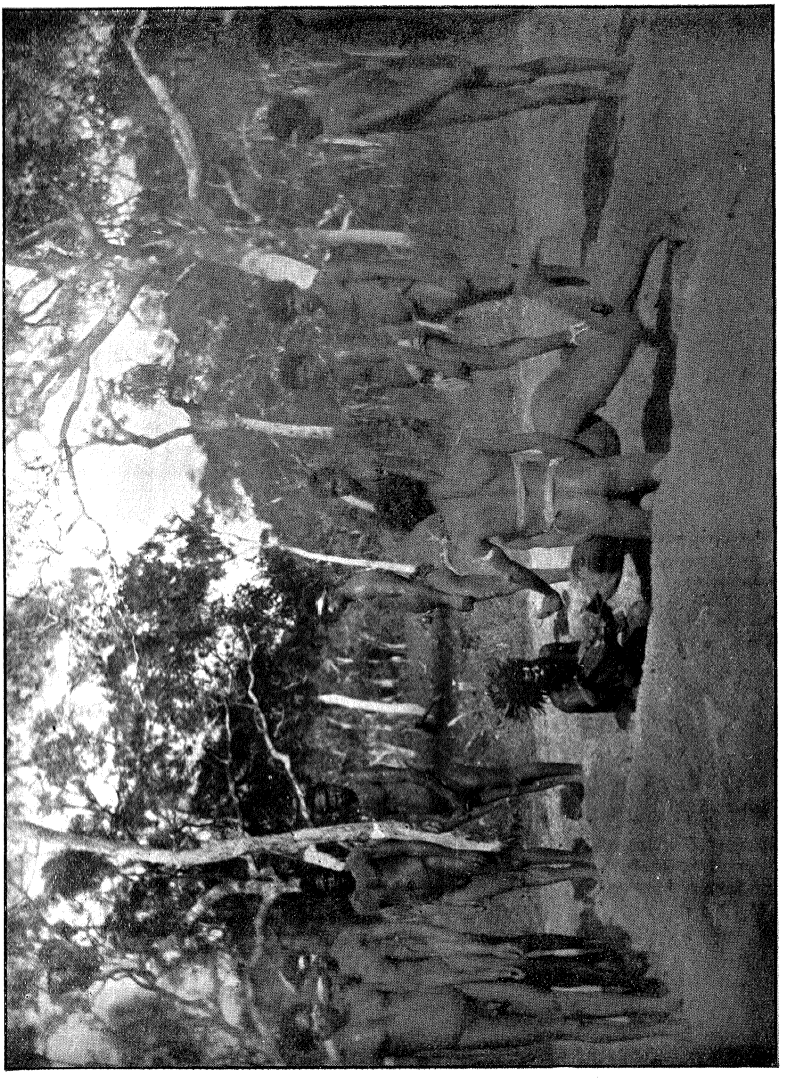
Dance of the Black Palm of the Koko-yimidir Blacks at the McIvor River.



Dr. W. E. ROTH, Photo.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE LVI.

Dance of the Fresh-water Mussel of the Koko-yimidir Blacks at the McIvor River.



Dr. W. E. ROTH, photo.

[The following corrections were published in the Table of Contents for Volume 7 in February, 1910—Sub-Editor, September, 2009]

CORRECTIONS.

———

Page 132, line 11—add "*C.*"

,, ,, line 22—delete "*u.*"

,, 213, line 5—for "*bullocki*" read "*bullockii.*"

,, 214, line 4—for "*æmulœ*" read "*æmula.*"

,, 215, line 13 from the bottom—for "silk on *stabilimentum*" read "silk or *stabilimentum.*"

,, 221, line 22—for "Belle View Hill" read "Belle Vue Hill."

,, 262—*Chiton torri*, Hedley and Hull. As this name is preoccupied by Mr. H. Suter (Proc. Malac. Roc., vii., 1907, p. 295) for a New Zealand species, the Australian shell may be known as *Chiton torriana*, Hedley and Hull.

,, 270, line 4—for "avicircularia" read "avicularia."

,, 285, line 3—for *Bothriembyron gunni*" read "*Bothriembryon gunnii.*"

,, 285, line 8—for "*Bulinus gunnii*" read "*Bulimus gunnii.*"

,, 285, line 14—after "Mt. Farrell" insert "Family Helicidæ,"

,, 330, under heading No. 5, line 3—after "Adelaide" insert "Johnston."

,, 331, line 1—omit "8."

,, ,, line 8—for "9" read "8."

,, ,, line 12—for "10" read "9."

,, 335, line 11—for "Australia" read "Australian human."

,, 336, under heading 23, line 2—omit the comma after "which."

Plate xiii., explanation—lines 3 and 5 for "Inorthographic" read "Orthographic."

,, l., explanation—for "Amboipo" read "Amboiba."

,, li., explanation—for "Amboida" read "Amboiba."

,, liii., explanation—for "Amboida" read "Amboiba."

,, lxiii., explanation—for "*Gasteracantya*" read "*Gasteracantha.*"

,, lxxii., explanation—for "fig. 28" read "fig. 23."

,, lxxxi.—transpose 2 and 3.