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NORTH QUEENSLAND ETHNOGRAPHY.

BULLETIN No. 10.

MARRIAGE CEREMONIES AND INFANT LIFE.

By WALTER E. ROTH, Magistrate of the Pomeroon District, British Guiana; late Chief Protector of Aborigines, Queensland; Corresponding Member of the Anthropological Societies, Berlin and Florence, the Anthropological Institute, London, etc.

(Plates i.-iii.).

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1. Every marriage, independently of the basis upon which it is being contracted, whether by betrothal, authority, mutual attachment, inheritance or exchange, must at least be regulated

according to the primary exogamous groups of which the contracting parties are members. This is an essential before it can be publicly recognised, its breach constituting, according to the district where committed, a crime punishable by death (*e.g.*, North-West Districts) down to a matter for ridicule and contempt (Tully River). Indeed, in those rare cases of what might be called irregular marriages, the rest of the community will assist another boy with more lawful claim, *i.e.*, an individual of the suitable exogamous group, to get possession of the woman in question for himself. Furthermore, under such circumstances both parties are continually being ridiculed, nagged and sneered at by the other females, a course of action usually quite sufficient to cause a separation.

2. But because the two would-be contracting parties do actually belong to suitable exogamous groups, it does not necessarily follow that all impediments to the proposed marriage are removed. For instance, in the North-West generally, a man cannot marry his father's sister's daughter, his mother's brother's daughter, or his daughter's daughter, while a woman must carnally avoid her mother's brother's son, her father's sister's son, or her son's son, etc., notwithstanding the fact that these particular relationships are necessarily located in the same exogamous groups¹ which otherwise would be allowed to join in permanent sexual partnership. Similarly, on the Bloomfield River, where the social nomenclature has also been worked out, the same thing applies.

The same holds true for other districts equally remote from one another, the commonly accepted view that the complicated systems of class-organisation met with amongst the different tribes act as a check on consanguinity requiring re-consideration. Indeed, ever since I suggested² a probable interpretation of the class-systems, closer investigation has led me to believe in its reality, *viz.*, that they have been devised, by a process of natural selection, to regulate the food supply. And so far as the food supply is concerned, the group-system certainly regulates marriage, but just as surely it does not check consanguinity. Even amongst types of black folk where the standard of morality is even for a primitive people comparatively low, and where but little attention from a marital point of view need necessarily be paid to the exogamous groups, *e.g.*, on the Tully River, there is an absolute absence of familiarity between blood brother and sister. Whatever the general faults of the natives may be, incest

¹ Roth—Ethnol. Studies, etc., 1897, Sect. 65, table.

² Roth—Ethnol. Studies, etc., 1897, Sect. 71.

is not included in them, and I am satisfied in my own mind that the idea which has prompted him to avoid as far as possible the intermarriage of blood relatives represents a gradual development of the moral sense.

3. A third essential for the marriage to be publicly recognised is that one (Princess Charlotte Bay, Tully River, etc.) or both (North-West Districts) of the contracting parties must be of suitable rank so far as initiation is concerned: where one is necessary it is that of the male.

4. A feature of more than ordinary interest is the right of marital relationship between a husband and his wife's blood-sisters on the Pennefather and Tully Rivers, and between a wife and her husband's blood brothers on the Tully River. Cases of this nature, coupled with the handing over of the widow to her late husband's brother, bear strong evidence of communal marriage in a very primitive condition, before the distinction had come to be made between blood- and group-members of the different class-systems. The sexual orgie at the expense of the bride upon her initiation into womanhood is also significant from this point of view.³

5. The ceremonial sign of marriage is represented by the building of a hut and the lighting of a fire on the part of the girl (though this duty may be performed by her mother on the Upper Normanby River) and by the seizing of her wrist on the part of the husband. In the North-West District sign language, the ideagram for marriage by capture, is represented by a wrist-grasp.⁴

There is no public celebration or rejoicing on the advent of a marriage, nor do the contracting parties do anything in the way of special ornaments or decorations.

There would seem to be no special season of the year devoted to the celebration of marriage. In those districts where the burial ceremonies include the growth of the mourner's hair, no marriages take place till this is cut, at the same time that the widows are handed over.

In cases where a man marries into a tribe foreign to him, his wife and children become members of his own.

6. On the Pennefather River betrothal is the usual form of giving in marriage, the old men usually getting the pick: even while yet *in utero* an infant is occasionally promised in this way on the chance of its being a girl. A present of some food, spears, etc., is usually sufficient, and the promise is invariably adhered

³ Roth—Ethnol. Studies, etc., 1897, Sect. 305.

⁴ Roth—Ethnol. Studies, etc., 1897, Fig. 197.

to. As a rule, the marriage is not consummated until the girl is at full puberty, but what with the advent of Europeans and the increasing competition for the possession of wives, she is now often taken possession of at an earlier age, indeed so soon as the convenient opportunity occurs. The public ceremonial of marriage consists in the bride building the bridegroom's hut and lighting the fire there.

7. In the hinterland of Princess Charlotte Bay, betrothal is left to chance, the arrangements for which are generally brought to a head by the boy's father's sister. When, before puberty, the boy's tooth is being knocked out, the names of various eligible girls are called, the one which happens to be called when the tooth is actually out being recognised as the betrothed; needless to say, the name of the favourite is always kept to the very last. The Koko-warra speak of the girl betrothed by a special term; if of the same tribe, she is generally chosen from a district different from that of her future husband's. After the young man has passed the first initiation ceremony, and the girl's parents, for family and other considerations, consider him old enough, he is brought to the girl's camp. It is the girl's father who brings him from the single men's quarters where he has been camping, and leads him during the course of the night into his future bride's hut, whence her mother has just previously taken her departure. The alleged object of this arrangement is for the girl to get accustomed to the presence of her future husband, her parents keeping strict watch at the hut entrance to see that no sexual liberties take place and to ensure the youth's return to his own quarters before day-break. This procedure continues perhaps for a few weeks, certainly for two or three, the girl and her parents being fed at the trouble, and mollified (by spears, necklaces, etc.) at the expense of the young man. When finally the mother-in-law builds a hut, lights a fire, and leaves her daughter there, the young man enters to take up his permanent abode, and consummate the marriage undisturbed, his parents-in-law, henceforth tabu to him, returning to their own camp. It will be noted that there is no restriction of age or social status at which the bride may be delivered up, and it is of no uncommon occurrence to see an individual carrying on his shoulder his little child-wife who is perhaps too tired to toddle any further; the only essential is that the girl must always have an incisor knocked out previous to her having sexual connection with her lord and master. All that the wife's parents look to is that their son-in-law is of suitable age and rank and blessed with an abundance of worldly goods, *e.g.*, spears, wommeras, necklaces, etc., which are invariably presented as a sort of solatium.

8. At Cape Bedford a system of betrothal exists, though it does not appear to be carried out very strictly. It is more usual for the man to ask the parents' consent when the girl is of marriageable age. The parents "do not give her to him willingly or with kindly feelings. Both mother and father strike the young man's head first; when he is covered with blood they give her to him. Once given to him, the wife builds the hut and lights the fire. But the girl does not readily go to meet her husband; her mother and father have to send her before she will go; then she meets him. Furthermore, during the day-time, she will not sit alongside him in the shade. She is always with her mother. So much for the bride."⁵ She must, however, pass one whole night with him before the marriage ceremony, such as it is, can be publicly recognised. This striking of the young man's head, the symbolism of which I have been informed represents the idea of the bridegroom having to fight the parents for her, is paralleled in the neighbourhood of Cape Grafton (see Sect. 11), where the future husband has to clash swords, etc., as in mimic warfare with certain of the girl's relatives before the marriage can be consummated.

9. At Boggy Creek, Upper Normanby River, there is a similar practice of asking the parent's consent, the fire being kindled and the hut built near the single men's quarters by the bride's mother, who carries the young man's belongings, spears, etc., to the new home; her father then comes and fetches the bridegroom. Or again, the wife may be given to her future husband by the wrist, the woman herself, in this case, kindling the fire. Of course in these cases where the parents' wishes have to be consulted, there is always a solatium in the way of presents.

10. On the Bloomfield River children are betrothed at birth. If already married, the husband will take charge of his betrothed wife when about four or five years old; this is especially the case if he moves about a great deal or lives some distance away from her tribe. If not already married, he has to wait until such time as she reaches puberty, though if close upon that age and he is about to leave for some other district, he will take her by the wrist in the presence of all the other natives—the ceremonial sign of marriage—tell her she is his, and warn her parents to look after her well and to report to him at once should anyone attempt to interfere with her. If ultimately the girl is too shy to go to her future husband's hut, her brother or father will accompany her; if still recalcitrant, her husband will seize her

⁵ Roth—Bull. 2—Sect. 31D.

wrist and pull her in. A man here is always supposed to make presents to his future mother-in-law.

11. At Cape Grafton betrothal may similarly take place in infancy, the boy being allowed to marry her after his passing the first initiation ceremony, and cases have been mentioned to me where the future husband has put his brand, in the shape of three vertical cuts, upon the girl's shoulder.

12. Amongst the Tully River natives betrothal is also recognised; a father can give his daughter, as infant or maid, to any man young or old so long as he has the two essential decorative scars indicative of his initiation. The individual to whom she is now given or betrothed can take her straight away with him there and then if he so chooses, but if very young he usually loans her to some comparatively old man,⁶ necessarily belonging to the same exogamous group as himself, to sleep with and train for him; this action on the part of the elder is deemed to make the little child's genitalia develop all the more speedily.

13. At Torilla and Pine Mountain, on the east central coast, the following procedure⁷ used to be observed in the "old days." When a little girl is about three years old some blackfellow wants her to be betrothed to him, but as it is not considered good form to ask her parents, he constantly makes them presents of tit-bits of food and honey, weapons, etc. Of course they understand what he is after, and provided they fancy him for a son-in-law will call together the uncles (the girl's mother's brothers) and consult with them. If these latter are agreeable, either the father or an uncle will ask the would-be bridegroom whether he would like to have the girl, offer to betroth her to him, and he accepts. The parents next paint the little girl, and stick into her hair a lot of feathers, which are mostly eagle-hawk. In the meantime the future husband sits quite still at his camp-fire, gazing intently on the ground, and on no pretext whatever will he look behind. The uncles next bring up the little baby girl so decorated and seat her at the back of, but not touching, her future lord and master. They then leisurely take the feathers one at a time from out of the child's hair and stick them successively into the man's. When the feathers are all fixed in the latter, he arises, and without once looking behind, leaves camp and does not return for a month or longer. After coming

⁶ It may be mentioned here that nothing is said (though it is of course impossible to learn how much may be thought) of any of the elder males, provided they belong to the proper groups, tampering with any young female children.

⁷ Reported to me by Mr. W. H. Flowers.

back he continues to send the little girl various presents of food, etc., she being even allowed to go to his camp provided he happens to have anything particularly good to eat, and help him partake of it. On the other hand, he is not allowed to visit his betrothed's camp, or speak to her mother, always sending his presents through a third person, or giving them to her personally should he happen to meet her unaccompanied by her mother. When the girl's father and her mother's brothers consider her old enough for the marriage to be consummated, they tell the bridegroom so, but never a word to the girl. The future husband thereupon paints himself up, takes all his fighting weapons with him, and tells the news to the other men of his own exogamous group. He next watches his opportunity to find the girl away from her parents or out in the bush with the women, approaches her as silently as he can, and seizes her by the wrist. The other females will try and help her to get away, but he will call upon his group-mates for assistance to keep them off. Whether she approves or not, she will scream and exert her utmost to free herself, even biting his hand to make him let go, and provided she can release her wrist she has a chance of escape; her endeavours, however, invariably prove futile: she is dragged by him to his camp and the marriage consummated, after which any of her husband's group-mates who have rendered assistance may claim the temporary loan of her. Being thus proclaimed his wife, she lives with him at his camp, although he will probably take her away from the neighbourhood of her parents for some little time to come.

14. In the North-West, though I cannot find any traces of the practice in the Boulia District, a form of betrothal takes place at the first male initiation ceremony on the Upper Georgina River, certainly among the Yaro-inga,⁸ and perhaps, independently of initiation, in the Leichhardt-Selwyn District among the Kalkadun.

15. Throughout the Boulia District, each male can have at least two wives, an official one supplied him as a member of the community by the Camp-council, and an unofficial one of his own choice, whose love, such as it is, he finds reciprocated; the former woman is known as the *no-po*, the latter as the *pandira*, though both share equal rights and responsibilities. Supposing that the Camp-council consider a man fit and suitable to have a wife, he has to take whomsoever is assigned to him thus:—The brothers, or mother's brothers, of the young woman talk among themselves

⁸ Roth—Ethnol. Studies, etc., 1897—Sect. 302.

concerning this particular individual being a bachelor, etc., and convene all the other males available of first-initiation rank and upwards to a Camp-council where the qualifications of the marriageable men are put under consideration; during the deliberations, in which no women are allowed to take part, the person *sub judice* can be present to listen only, but more usually he will leave camp to go on some fishing or hunting expedition. If all is found to be proper and satisfactory,⁹ and the vote of the Camp-council must be unanimous, the woman's brothers, or mother's brothers, present the bridegroom elect some time during the day with a smouldering fire-stick. This stick has nothing whatever distinctive about it; any small piece of wood, about five or six inches long, of any material or shape, is sufficient. The same intermediaries some time after sundown give a similar stick to the bride and direct her to her future husband's hut, whither it is obligatory on her part to go and remain. This ceremony is binding on both sides, and except by mutual agreement, the couple can only be parted by death.

16. The widow becomes the property of one of her late husband's brothers, the consummation of her re-marriage usually only taking place at Cape Bedford, the Bloomfield River, Cape Grafton, etc., when the mourner's hair which has been allowed to grow during the burial ceremonies is finally cut; on the Lower Tully, however, she can on occasion be re-married on the day following her late husband's decease, independently of all the complicated burial customs taking place there. At Cape Bedford the deceased's next younger blood- or group-brother, the former having the prior claim, has the first choice of the widow, who is not apparently forced to re-marry, though she generally thinks better of it and does. She is hammered on the head the day after her husband's decease, with a wommera, by all the old men round about, who excuse their conduct by saying that from the very first she was jealous of some other girl and forbade her late husband to have her, and further that she used to eat his food, which otherwise they might have had and enjoyed.¹⁰ On the Bloomfield River the widow's own group- or blood-brother has the greatest say as to which one of her late spouse's brothers she has to be given to. There are often great disputes over arranging

⁹ As to the suitable exogamous groups, both of them of at least first-initiation rank.

¹⁰ Roth—Bull. 2—Sect. 31D, where it will be noted that the hammering does not take place if the deceased was an old man. [It is not worth while avenging an old man whose infirm "spirit" could do the survivors no harm.—W. E. R.]

this matter. The finally chosen one stands up to have the spear thrown over him¹¹ by the other brothers who have next claim, for until this is done he is aware that his assumed right is not generally admitted; occasionally, if any dispute or unpleasantness occurs, he may have to fight for her, though finally she is handed over to him by the wrist, and everything is settled. On the Tully River the widow is claimed by whichever of her late husband's group- or blood-brothers is old enough and strong enough to hold his own; consequently there is often a fight or two over the settlement.

17. Permanent sexual union based on the mutual attachment of the two contracting parties may have to be confirmed, so to speak, by certain official formalities, or may in itself constitute a marriage recognised and upheld by the community, a great deal depending upon whether the woman is a free agent or not, *i.e.*, single, married, betrothed, etc. In the Boulia District, under those circumstances where a man is in love with a single woman who reciprocates, but the Camp-council, for some reason or other, refuses ratification, they will probably elope some night and after living together for a month or two return to camp. But when they do come back, both have to run the gauntlet of the outraged community, certain members of which will cripple them with knives by hacking into the shoulders and buttocks, will bruise or hammer them about the limbs and head with sticks and boomerangs, or puncture the fleshy parts of the thighs with spears. The perpetrators of the punishment take very good care that the injuries inflicted should not prove fatal, because were this contingency to occur they know full well that the death would be avenged by the victim's brothers, etc. Having undergone the recognised chastisement for breaking the old-established rule, the couple is now recognised as husband and wife.¹² Such a wife is the unofficially loved-one already referred to as the *pandira*; if she is not already of third-initiation rank she returns to her mother's hut every morning, and neither prepares nor cooks her husband's food; only after the birth of her first child does she remain at her husband's apartment permanently.¹³ Amongst the Lower Tully River natives, all that either contract-

¹¹ Roth—Bull. 8—Sect. 13.

¹² That is to say, provided the former still wishes it; otherwise the latter is restored to her brother, etc., as being no longer required. Of course the amorous pair must be of suitable exogamous groups, and both of first-initiation rank; the sure penalty in this district for any breach of the former essential would be the death of both parties, with the tacit consent of the blood-relatives.

¹³ The same arrangement holds good with the official wife, or no-po,

ing parties has to do is to build a fresh hut and fire, and beckon the other in. Thus a good orthodox method here is for the woman to make the advance. Supposing she wants a particular boy, and they are members of the suitable exogamous group, she will make a new hut and light a fire there on his return from the day's chase; she then beckons him to come, and if he accepts and comes over, they are henceforth recognised as man and wife.

A man may unfortunately fall in love with a married woman who reciprocates his affections and elope with her.¹⁴ After a varying length of absence the couple will return, the seducer bringing her back to her original husband, who either forgives him¹⁵ and takes her unto himself again, in which case she will receive more or less chastisement, or tells her newly found lover to keep her, expecting, of course, a solatium in the way of spears, etc., or else fights, the victor being now the recognised husband. The particular behaviour of the injured husband will vary according as he is afraid or not to fight; where the two men do come to blows they make no attempt at actual killing, for fear of retribution, and their quarrel is not joined in by any others. If the original husband, in the North-Western Districts, refuses to receive his erring spouse, the Camp-council sees that she becomes and is recognised as the wife of the man she ran away with. A man eloping with a woman only betrothed to another has to answer for his conduct to the latter in the same manner as if she were already married.

18. Marriage by capture includes those cases where, on the part of the male, the attachment is one-sided, the female not being a consenting party, with the result that more or less force and stratagem has to be brought into requisition, such as there is being usually dependent upon whether she is a tribeswoman or a stranger. Thus, on the Tully River a man may beckon a woman over to his freshly built hut and newly lighted fire, and if she refuses, will pull her in by the wrist; were she to scream too much, to show fight, and bite, etc., he will just thrash and hammer her and compel submission. The woman is absolutely passive; she may howl and try to get away, but no notice is taken, she being now his recognised wife. In most cases, however, marriage by capture of a tribeswoman is a somewhat risky affair, in that the self-assertive husband has to answer for his conduct to her male relatives, etc. Matters, of course, are different where the captured wife is a stranger, with no friends

¹⁴ In the N.W. Districts, if he values his life, she must be of the proper exogamous group.

¹⁵ Roth—Bull. 8—Sect. 2.

amongst her captors. Here the dusky Lothario will generally get certain of his mates to lend assistance and organise a regular wife-hunting expedition, for which purpose certain hip- and tail-ornaments are included in the accoutrements; lives may be lost on both sides, but if successful those who have rendered help will be rewarded with a promiscuous sexual orgie at the expense of the captive bride.

19. A man in the North-West Districts can exchange his true blood-sister for the blood-sister of another individual, the brothers or mother's brothers leading the brides to their respective future homes the same night, two marriages being thus simultaneously consummated. This arrangement only holds good, however, provided the contracting parties are of first-initiation rank and of suitable exogamous groups, and that the unanimous vote of the Camp-council sanctions it. Otherwise, and in other districts, although the husband has the power so to do, the selling or bartering of wives, independently of course of their temporary loan for venery, but rarely takes place; even in the Tully River District, where, on an aboriginal standard, morals are at a very low ebb, this practice is not in vogue. Indeed, in making a retrospect of the cases known to me, I am inclined to believe that on the whole the selling of a wife is a late innovation introduced by contamination with an undesirable class of European and Asiatic settler.

20. Throughout the North-West Districts, the female at her first-initiation ceremony, which is obligatory before her marriage can be legally recognised, is forced to undergo sexual connection with certain of the "bucks" present.¹⁶ In marriage by capture, the bride has to submit to a similar ordeal from the males who have lent assistance. And on the Pennefather River there is a sort of "first-fruit" arrangement,¹⁷ the husband having to allow his wife promiscuous intercourse with certain "bucks" of his own group before he is considered to possess full and sole rights.

21. Divorce is permitted to the man, but seldom to the woman. At Cape Bedford the process is very simple; if the husband does not want his wife, he just tells her so and lets her go, there being no fighting with the man who next takes possession of her, she of course being now free to marry again. Amongst the Bloomfield River natives, on the other hand, divorce is allowed to either party, although the weaker vessel does not usually resort to such a measure unless well backed by powerful relatives. If the husband wishes to free himself, he

¹⁶ Roth—Ethnol. Studies, etc., 1897—Sect. 305.

¹⁷ Rev. N. Hey, of Mapoon, drew my attention to this.

generally arranges the matter quietly with one of his group- or blood-brothers, gets him to take her, and holding her by the wrist, hands her over. In those portions of the North-West where the Camp-council ratifies the marriage of two adults, and elsewhere where the ceremony is based on mutual attachment, the two contracting parties may mutually agree to sever marital relations.

22. Polygamy, and within certain limits, polyandry, are practised and recognised throughout the North, the limits depending upon the suitable exogamous groups, acquiescence or absence of the original husband, etc. As a general rule, the older the man, other things equal, the larger is his number of wives, the favourite usually being the youngest in so far as the husband most often takes her with him on any hunting expedition, etc., such favouritism, however, having its disabilities in that while in camp she suffers most at the hands of her fellow-wives, all of whom usually live together. On the Bloomfield River, it would seem that the wife obtained by betrothal is thought far more of than the ones acquired by capture or inheritance. So also in the Boullia District the unofficial wife is always in greater favour than the official one chosen by the Camp-council; indeed the term significatory of the former, *pandira*, has almost come to mean a settler's mistress in contradistinction to his lawfully wedded wife. Once married, the husband has marital rights over his wife's blood-sisters, and indeed, as on the Pennefather River, where there is a plurality of wives, these are often blood-sisters. There would seem to be differences as to when these rights can be claimed; on the Pennefather River, for instance, the husband has to ask his step-parents for them as each arrives at marriageable age, whereas on the Tully River he may satisfy his desires by force if necessary, irrespective of any age, unless the girl is already married, when he can do so by getting her husband's permission. For, according to his mood, a husband here may or may not object to his wife having intercourse with any of his group- or blood-brothers, she being certainly punished were she to suffer the embraces of a member of any other exogamous group; on the other hand, during her husband's absence she can without fear of any consequences, regularly sleep with any of his blood-brothers.

23. The birth of twins, full blood, judging by the cases that come under notice, does not appear to be of such common occurrence as that of half-caste ones. Several are known on the Lower Tully River, but only one example on the Bloomfield.¹⁸ The difficulty

¹⁸ On the authority of Mr. R. Hislop, who was for the greater part of his life resident there.

of obtaining reliable data is increased by the fact that either no notice is taken of such an event, as at Cape Bedford, whereas in other districts they may be destroyed, and the information when sought for may prove unreliable. The only example I have seen (July, 1900) was that of Mundy's gin at Nunnville, viâ Cooktown, who had boy-twins, over twenty-four hours intervening between the two births. On the other hand, during 1899, three cases of half-caste twins came under my personal notice in the neighbourhood of Cooktown alone. That of aboriginal Rosie¹⁹ was extremely interesting:—On July 15th at 10.15 p.m. the first half-caste daughter was born; on July 18th at 5 a.m. a second one made her appearance, the two separate placentæ being removed the same morning at 10 a.m.; on July 22nd both infants were weighed, the elder turning the scales at 3 lbs. and the younger at 4 lbs.

Considering the population, triplets cannot be rare on the Lower Tully River; the following four women have been reported to me²⁰ as having proved themselves worthy of receiving the Queen's bounty:—Chur-ngoi (twins on a previous occasion), Burakun, Ngunara, and Mau-uba.

24. On the Lower Tully River infanticide is fairly common; either sex is destroyed, and it is usually done by the mother. The two main reasons given for the practice here are that the child gave the mother too much pain and trouble in coming into the world, and that the mother does not want to be bothered with it. In the case of twins, the mother will often keep one, and kill the other by choking; so also will she often kill a child that is born with any deformity. Infanticide is not considered in the light of any crime or offence, provided that it is done within the first day or two of the child's existence. Furthermore, a child may here be killed for a crime committed by its parents.²¹ At Cape Grafton infanticide, irrespective of sex, is prevalent (I am only speaking up to 1898), and effected by just throwing the baby into the water and letting it drown, or else suffocating it by throttling, but though the practice is recognised it is usually done clandestinely. On the Bloomfield River infanticide was never prevalent until the Europeans came and half-caste children appeared, the father doing it by stamping upon the child's chest (R. Hislop). At Cape Bedford the practice may be resorted to when the children appear too quickly one after the other. In the North-Western Districts infants may

¹⁹ Under the care of Dr. Kortüm.

²⁰ By Mr. E. Brooke.

²¹ Roth—Bull. 8—Sect. 2.

be killed by the fathers with a blow from a stick, or allowed to starve.

25. In the North-Western Districts, on the east coast-line (Cape Grafton) and elsewhere, abortion does not appear to be an uncommon practice. It is performed by the fixation of a thick cord wound very tightly round and round the abdominal walls, combined with the punching by hand or stick upon the more palpable and apparently firmer portions of the unborn child. In many areas still-births are prevalent owing not only to the women fighting amongst themselves, but also on account of the way they are often knocked about by their husbands.

26. Immediately after birth, in the Boullia and Upper Georgina Districts, baby is "washed" in ashes, mud, or sand, but usually in the last-mentioned, the head and face being alike cleaned. When the Kalkadun infant is taken out of the shallow excavation into which it is allowed to tumble, any sand that may chance to stick to its face and mouth is removed with leaves; otherwise it is neither washed nor cleaned. Subsequently, however, the baby is smeared from top to toe with "iguana"-fat which is renovated continuously during its early years of life, while, at intervals, some powdered ashes are rubbed on the head over the areas of the fontanels. The Cape Bedford baby, after birth, is rubbed clean with sand and then exposed to the sun; indeed, to be left exposed like this during the day-time is a very common practice.

In all districts the suckling of children continues up to a comparatively advanced age. A mother may commonly be seen with two infants at the breast, and I have often come across children of three, four, and even five years of age running up for a suck. These women certainly do not continue breast-feeding their children for these lengths on the chance of avoiding pregnancy,²² and yet several cases have been made known to me where they have been very determined on the matter; *e.g.*, during the year 1897 Mrs. L. in attempting to wean a four or five year old youngster by taking its Keppel Island mother away on a three weeks' visit to the Yeppoon, discovered that the latter had during the whole period secretly got one of the other gins to suckle her breasts regularly so as to keep them full. As the babies become older, they are fed more and more on honey, kangaroo and opossum flesh, etc. Though no exact statistics are obtainable, the loss of infant life is very marked, especially

²² Amongst these folk I am very doubtful of there being any such physiological connection.

during the wet season, when food is comparatively difficult to obtain, and in the cold weather.

Throughout North Queensland a very common method of carrying a newly-born or comparatively young infant is in a sheet of bark slung up to the mother's side. This sheet of bark, derived from various timbers, is scorched on its inner surface so as to produce a curling-over inwards at the sides; this is slung with twine, etc., over the mother's opposite shoulder and balanced pretty carefully with the hand to prevent the youngster (lying on an old net, some rags, or soft grass) from falling out at either end. Where *koolamons*²³ are met with, these may take the place of the curled bark-sheets. In the Peninsula, and along the East Coast, a slightly older baby may be carried in a dilly-bag slung over the shoulders. As the child's age increases, it is carried on the shoulders (Plate ii., fig. 2; Plate iii., figs. 1-3) or flank, usually only on the former by the father, usually on the one or other by the mother (Plate iii., fig. 4); in the one case it grasps its parent's forehead and neck with its little hands and legs respectively, while in the latter it sits upon its mother's hip supported in position by her protecting arm.

A mother never sings lullabies to her child, beyond a sort of droning humming sound to send it to sleep. The only thing she does is to rock her baby in a basket dilly-bag, bark trough, etc., resting on the ground, or else swing it suspended from the branch of a tree. She may slap it after the approved European fashion, and sometimes frighten it by making grimaces, a favourite one in the North-West Districts being produced by passing a string through the nasal septum and drawing the nose upwards.

27. I have not come across a single reliable example of the existence of more than three generations at one and the same time.

Families may be large or small, or conspicuous by their absence, but on the whole it would appear that the largest number of children are born to those men with but one wife. At Cape Bedford it is not uncommon for women to have six or seven youngsters; at the Bloomfield River five or six, one being known to have had nine. Amongst the natives in the unsettled districts it is naturally impossible to obtain reliable data as to the numbers of children born, not only on account of the difficulty of obtaining reliable interpreters, but also because of the general dislike to speaking of those of their kith and kin who have gone before. At any rate, amongst people living a natural existence in their own environments, it is impossible that the birth rate

²³ Roth—Bull. 7—Sect. 62.

can be so low, and the death rate so high, as is met with amongst a native population living in more or less contact with the European. To show this the more forcibly, I propose giving two examples, one from Camooweal and the other from Mapoon, Batavia River, where the natives have succumbed to the encroachment and abuse of the pastoralist and pearl-sheller respectively. On 24th May, 1900, there happened to be twenty-five women in the native camp, all of them over puberty, *i.e.*, marriageable or of fertile age; taking young and old alike, I asked each one separately how many children, boys and girls, had been born to her, and how many of these, of either sex, were alive or dead. As will be seen from the following table, these twenty-five women had twenty-eight live children between them:—

Case Number.	Boys.		Girls.	
	Alive.	Dead.	Alive.	Dead.
1	...	...	...	...
2	...	...	1	...
3	1	...	...	...
4	1	...	...	...
5	...	...	2	...
6	1	...	...	...
7	...	...	2	...
8	..	...	2	1
9	...	...	...	...
10	...	1	...	...
11	...	...	2	...
12	...	...	1 (half-caste)	...
13	1	...	...	...
14	1	...	2	...
15	1	...	...	...
16	...	1	1	...
17	1	...	...	3
18	1	...	2	...
19	1	...	1	...
20	...	...	...	...
21	...	2	...	...
22	...	...	1	...
23	...	...	1 (half-caste)	...
24	1	...	...	...
25	...	...	..	...
Total	10	4	18	4

During the course of the preceding year I had made a similar investigation amongst the native women in the camp at Mapoon, making enquiry from the first one hundred women above puberty,

young and old, whom I saw. From the particulars tabulated, I found that these one hundred women had but one hundred and nine live children between them.

No.	Alive.		Dead.		Total	No.	Alive.		Dead.		Total	No.	Alive.		Dead.		Total
	B	G	B	G			B	G	B	G			B	G	B	G	
1	1	2	...	...	3	35	...	...	...	...	0	69	...	...	...	...	0
2	...	...	...	...	0	36	1	1	...	1	3	70	...	...	...	2	2
3	...	...	...	1	1	37	...	...	1	...	1	71	...	...	...	...	0
4	2	2	1	2	7	38	...	...	2	...	2	72	...	...	...	...	0
5	...	...	...	...	0	39	3	1	...	1	5	73	2	1	2	2	7
6	...	1	...	1	2	40	...	1	...	...	1	74	...	2	...	1	3
7	1	1	1	1	4	41	2	...	...	1	3	75	1	1	1	2	5
8	1	1	1	...	3	42	1	...	...	2	3	76	1	...	...	...	1
9	...	...	...	1	1	43	...	2	...	...	2	77	...	...	2	1	3
10	...	1	1	...	2	44	1	1	...	1	3	78	1	...	...	...	1
11	2	1	1	3	7	45	...	...	...	...	0	79	1	...	...	...	1
12	1	1	...	...	2	46	...	...	1	...	1	80	...	...	2	...	2
13	...	1	1	1	3	47	...	2	1	1	4	81	1	2	...	1	4
14	1	1	...	1	3	48	...	1	3	...	4	82	1	...	...	...	1
15	...	1	1	...	2	49	...	...	1	1	2	83	...	...	...	1	1
16	...	...	...	...	0	50	1	...	3	1	5	84	...	1	...	...	1
17	1	...	...	1	2	51	...	...	1	2	3	85	1	2	2	...	5
18	2	1	...	...	3	52	3	2	...	...	5	86	1	...	...	...	1
19	1	...	...	...	1	53	...	1	...	...	1	87	...	...	...	...	0
20	2	...	...	1	3	54	3	1	...	1	5	88	2	...	...	1	3
21	...	...	...	...	0	55	1	1	2	...	4	89	...	...	...	...	0
22	1	...	...	...	1	56	...	1	...	1	2	90	1	...	...	...	1
23	1	1	...	1	3	57	1	...	2	1	4	91	1	...	1	...	2
24	1	...	...	...	1	58	...	...	...	...	0	92	...	...	...	...	0
25	...	1	...	2	3	59	1	...	...	1	2	93	1	1	2	1	5
26	1	1	2	1	5	60	...	1	...	...	1	94	...	1	1	...	2
27	...	...	1	1	2	61	1	...	1	1	3	95	2	1	2	1	6
28	...	2	1	1	4	62	1	1	...	...	2	96	...	1	...	1	2
29	...	...	1	...	1	63	...	...	1	...	1	97	...	...	2	1	3
30	...	...	...	1	1	64	1	...	...	...	1	98	1	...	...	2	3
31	1	...	...	...	1	65	1	1	2	...	4	99	...	...	...	...	0
32	...	1	...	...	1	66	...	...	...	1	1	100	1	1	...	1	3
33	1	...	1	1	3	67	...	2	...	...	2	Grand total—					
34	...	...	1	1	2	68	...	...	...	...	0	62+54+52+57=225					

Numbers 45, 51, 72 were pregnant. Nos. 67 to 73 were the seven wives of one man, and had eleven children between them, though one woman alone contributed seven to this total.

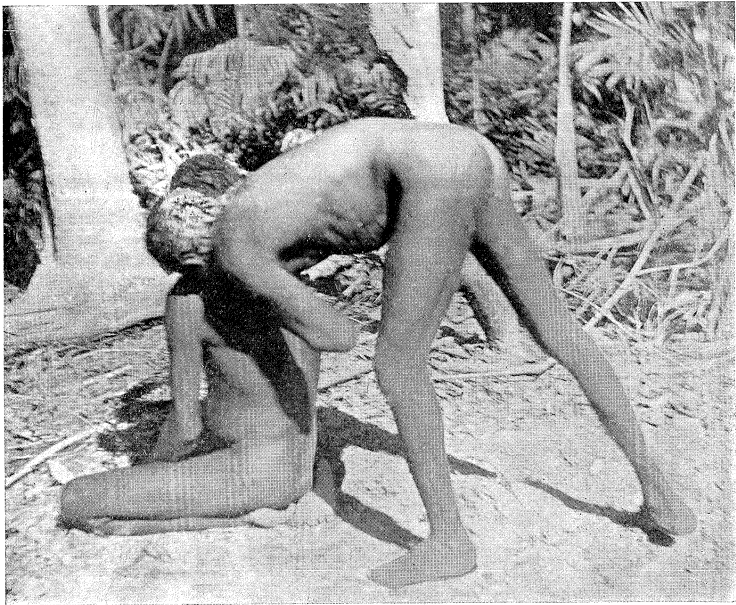
EXPLANATION OF PLATE I.

ABORIGINAL CUSTOMS.

Figs. 1 and 2. Assisting in confinement. Tully River.



1

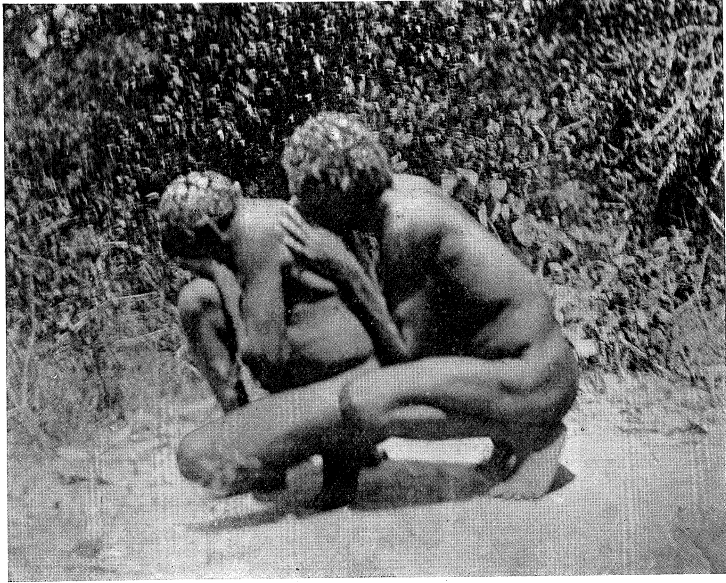


2

EXPLANATION OF PLATE II.

ABORIGINAL CUSTOMS.

- Fig. 1. Assisting in confinement, Tully River.
,, 2. Man and two women, the latter with children astride on their shoulders.



1



2

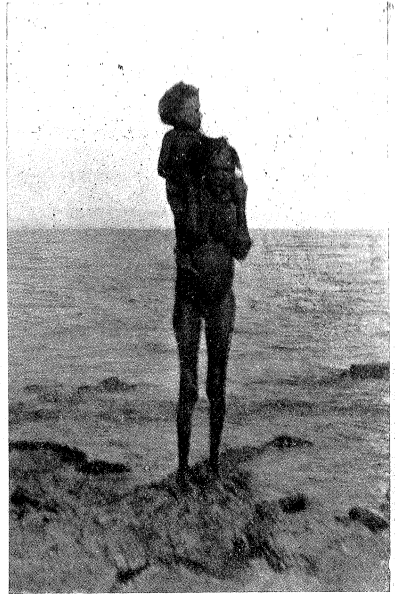
EXPLANATION OF PLATE III.

ABORIGINAL CUSTOMS.

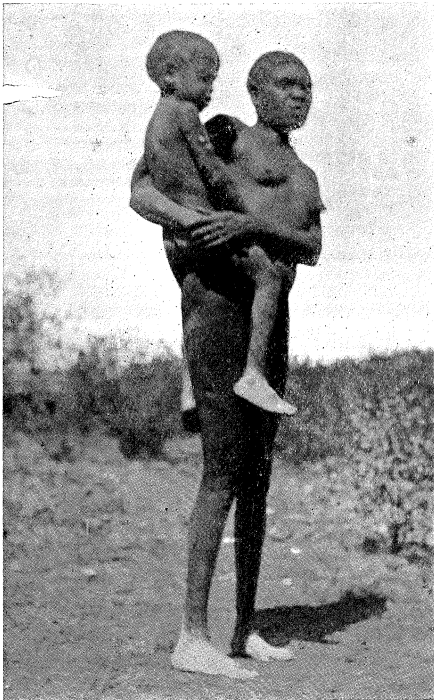
- Figs. 1, 2 & 4. Women carrying children astride on their shoulders.
Bentinck Island.
- Fig. 3. Woman carrying child astride on her right hip. Glenormiston.



1



2



3



4

[The following corrections were printed in Volume 12 number 3
—Sub-Editor, August, 2009.]

CORRECTIONS.

Substitute the Explanations of Plates I. and II. herewith,
for those formerly supplied.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE I.

ABORIGINAL CUSTOMS.

- Fig. 1. Assisting in confinement.
„ 2. Medicine man sucking bone out of wound.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE II.

- Fig. 1. Doctor using sucking string (this has been already published, see Bull. v., fig. 28.)
,, 2. Man and two women, the latter with children astride on their shoulders.

[The following corrections were published in Volume 7 No.2
and apply to this paper.—Sub-editor, August, 2009.]

CORRECTIONS.

Page 33, line 10, for "Strait" read "Straits."

Page 34, line 17, for "different" read "definite."

Page 34, line 26, for "in" read "inhabitants of."

Page 34, bottom line, for "Australia" read "Australasian"
(New Zealand being included).

Plate ii., fig. 1. Figured in error as "Assisting in Confinement." This figure has already been published in "North Queensland Ethnography," Bull. v., fig. 28, as "Doctor using sucking string," *cf.* page 33, section 141, which is the correct explanation of the figure.