THE BURBUNG OF THE WIRADTHURI TRIBES.

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[Read before the Royal Society of Queensland, 7th April, 1900.]

A paper by me under the above heading, read before the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain in 1895, was the first description of the inaugural ceremonies of the Wiradthuri tribes.* The following year I contributed a supplementary article containing further and more complete details.† In the present paper it is intended to give a short account of another meeting of the aboriginal inhabitants, which took place in June, 1898.

The general camp was erected about three miles farther down the Bulgeraga Creek than the locality I visited and described in my first article, and was on the right bank of that creek. This place is situated on what is known as the "Mole Country," on the Lower Macquarie River, Parish of Wullamgambone, County of Gregory, New South Wales. On one side of the main encampment was the boorbung, an oval space, whose diameters were 92 feet 8 inches, and 86 feet 5 inches respectively, bounded by a nick cut in the soil about three inches deep and four inches wide.

From the interior of the space referred to, all grass, stones, and timber had been removed, and the surface made level and smooth. In the side of the oval farthest from the camp, about four feet of the perimeter was left intact, for the purpose of affording ingress and egress when using the enclosure on ceremonial occasions, it not being permissible at such times to step over the nick or groove cut in the ground.

† Ibid., xxvi., 272–285.
The goombo, or buddha-goonang, was formed in some thickly wooded country 425 yards distant, in a northerly direction, and the four earthen heaps composing it were about thirty feet apart, and from fifteen to twenty inches in height. There were two inverted stumps of saplings, about two feet out of the ground, erected in a corresponding position to those shown in "Diagram 3," Plate xxv., accompanying my first paper on the Burbung.* Beyond the goombo was the usual screen of boughs, known as gareel. The stumps were about the same height and otherwise similar to those formerly described, and were stained with human blood in the same way.

On proceeding 241 paces along the pathway, tharambal, from the boorbung towards the goombo, it was found to pass through a rustic archway, formed by pulling together and fastening the tops of a number of saplings naturally growing at that spot, with boughs piled up thickly at each side, leaving a clear passage about three or four feet wide. From this point onward to the goombo the surface of the ground on either side of the path was ornamented with the usual yowan patterns, interspersed among which were human figures, representations of animals, native weapons, and other objects, which I shall briefly describe presently. Around the outside boundary of the area containing these mystic drawings, a fence of saplings and bushes had been erected to add to the exclusiveness of the place, and also to keep the white man's stock from trampling upon and defacing the artistic labours of the natives.

Three yards beyond the archway referred to there were cut into the turf the figure of a man and a woman, a little less than life-size, lying side by side, with their genital organs conspicuously displayed. Not far from this pair was the effigy of a man formed by stuffing a suit of European attire with grass and leaves. This was propped up to keep it in an erect posture, giving it the appearance of a sentry on the watch. A little further on the outline of an immense snake, called the Wahnee, was cut in the ground.

At the distance of 130 paces from the archway (or 371 paces from the boorbung), still going towards the goombo, a colossal horizontal representation of Baiamai, eight feet six inches long, and five feet ten inches across the chest, was formed by heaping up the loose earth into human shape. The chest, which was

the highest part of the body, was about a foot and a-half above the level of the surrounding ground. He was lying with his head towards the goombo, and near him was a boomerang and other weapons cut in the soil.

Between Baiamai and the goombo, a kangaroo was outlined by a groove in the soil, with a real spear inserted in its body. This spear was supposed to have been thrown by Baiamai before he slipped and fell where he is now lying.*

Besides the foregoing there were represented on the ground an iguana, a fish, an emu, a bullock, some birds' nests, a death-adder, a pig, and other things. An eagle hawk's eyrie was represented in one of the trees, and not far from the image of Baiamai was the usual fire on top of some raised earth. At another place an oval hole, between two and three feet in length and about a foot deep, was dug in the ground, to represent the vulva of a woman. Along the margin of this depression grass and small bushes were stuck in the loose soil, in imitation of hair. Around this device the men danced, muttering incantations and indulging in libidinous gestures.

On both sides of the path, between the archway and the goombo, the trees were marked with different objects, including iguanas, turtles, snakes, birds, the moon, and human figures. One of the trees had a wavy line cut into the bark along its bole for about seventeen feet from the ground, to represent the mark made by lightning, such as we sometimes see on trees in a forest after heavy thunder.

About two hundred people of all ages and both sexes, including several half-castes, were gathered at the main camp. They came from Gulargambone, Coonamble, Trangie, Dandaloo, Dubbo, Brewarrina, and Conkapeak. From the time the local mob selected the site and commenced preparing the ground, until the last contingent arrived, was more than three months, owing to various delays. At this gathering nine youths were admitted to the status of membership in their respective tribes. For particulars of the course of secret instruction in the bush—the inculcation of a mystic language and other occult teachings, the reader is referred to my previous articles on this subject.†

The punching out of a front upper incisor tooth of the graduates was formerly practised by these tribes, but of late

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years it has fallen into disuse. The custom of one or more of
the tribes present contributing a victim to furnish a cannibalistic
feast in connection with the secret ceremonies (*) has also ceased
for a number of years, in consequence of the stringency of the
white man’s laws respecting murder.

The Wiradthuri tribes are spread over a wide zone of
country, commencing a little way south of the Barwon River,
and stretching southerly almost to the Murray. Throughout
this immense territory the language spoken is substantially the
same; in the northern half of the nation the name is pro-
nounced Wiradthuri, and in the southern Wiradjuri. The
people are divided into four sections, called respectively, Murri,
Kubbi, Ippai, and Ooombi, with laws of intermarriage and
descent as particularized in the following table:—

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Offspring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murri</td>
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<td>Ooombi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kubbi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ippai</td>
<td>Murri</td>
<td>Kubbi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ooombi</td>
<td>Kubbi</td>
<td>Murri</td>
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