

FURTHER CARVED BOOMERANGS, AND TWO
VARIETIES OF THE LANGEEL FROM
NORTH QUEENSLAND.

BY R. ETHERIDGE, JUNR., CURATOR OF THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM,
SYDNEY.

(Plates xx.-xxi.)

I am again indebted to Mr. J. A. Boyd, of Ripple Creek, near Ingham, N.Q., for an opportunity of describing two further incised boomerangs, and two varieties of the *Langeel*, one resembling the *Marpangye* and the other the *Bendi*.

Both boomerangs are small weapons, much smaller than the generality of those with incised surfaces, being only twenty-one and a half inches across the curve. They are slightly convex on the obverse as usual and comparatively flat on the reverse, one somewhat more so than the other. The apices of one are sub-mucronate, those of the other obtusely pointed. The former weapon is almost smooth on the reverse, the latter finely grooved or tooled like so many of the better finished and older Aboriginal weapons.

The boomerang with the sub-mucronate apices (fig. 1) is nearly of the same type as one of those formerly sent to me by Mr. Boyd,* except that it is devoid of the representation of any natural object. As in the figure quoted, the median line of the obverse is occupied by a succession of conjoined ovals, or "sausage"-like figures, with the convex and concave margins scalloped, but this marginal sculpture in the present instance is

* Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales, 1897, Pt. 2, t. ii. f. 2.

very much shallower. Like the former and generally similar boomerang from Mr. Boyd, it is a modification of section (*g*) in my classification of this weapon.* The sub-mucronate apices are divided off from the remainder of the surface by cross-bars. The incisions in the central line of ovals are longitudinal, those of the marginal festoons are either slightly oblique to the longer axis of the weapon or angled to follow the outline of each festoon.

The second boomerang (fig. 2) is of the same type, in so far that the incised figures consist of lenticular ovals, two series, one on each flank of the convex surface, with marginal scalloping, the intermediate portion of the surface carrying ordinary St. Andrew's crosses. There are no cross-bars at the apices, but there is a broad transverse median band, with both longitudinal, longitudinal-oblique and transverse-oblique grooving, the last occupying a central and limited area on the band. The grooving of the two central rows of ovals is longitudinal, but that of the lateral festoons is oblique.

In his recently published work,† Dr. W. E. Roth has afforded an explanation of many of the figures found on carved boomerangs. The following facts are taken from this most excellent work:—The marginal festoons or scallopings are found only on weapons made in and to the south of the Boulia District, West Central Queensland. The lenticular or shuttle-shaped figures, when filled with more or less longitudinal lines are called by some of the blacks of the Boulia District “mountain-tops” (*mol-lo-ro*), by others they are said to represent the large fishing nets folded up for transit, and are called “fishing-net marks” (*ma-li ming-ka-ra*). On the other hand, in the Cloncurry District, these shuttles, when the infilling lines are strictly longitudinal, are known as “leaves” (*gin-ja-la*), but when the incised lines are oblique or slant-wise, they are called “white-shell marks” (*che-ka-ra*). The transverse incisions, which I have invariably alluded to as cross-bars, across

* Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales, 1894, ix. (2), Pt. 2, p. 198.

† Ethnological Studies among the North-West-Central Queensland Aborigines (8° Brisbane, 1897), pp. 144-145.

the breadth of the boomerangs, whether at the apices or in the middle, are known in the Boulia District as "handle-marks" (*tin-ja ming-ka-ra*). A description of the interstitial figures occurring on these boomerangs is also given, but those only that need be referred to here are the crosses on fig. 1. Similar crosses in the Boulia District are called "cross-cuts" (*wer-koo*), and are identical with those on the thighs of near male relatives in times of mourning.

In both the boomerangs now figured, applying Dr. Roth's facts, we observe the central portions occupied by the "mountain-top" or "fishing-net marks." One only (fig. 1) bears "handle-marks," whilst the other (fig. 2) exhibits "cross-cuts."

The other weapons sent me by Mr. Boyd are allied to a series I figured in the "Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie,"* and variously known under the names of *Langeel*, *Marpangye*, *Burroong*, *Coopin*, or *Bendi*, according to the form and locality of the weapon, and in my opinion all derived from one and the same original conception. The type is distributed in one or another of these forms from the south-east districts of South Australia, through Victoria, Eastern N.S. Wales as far north as the Tweed and Nambucra Rivers, and then again crops up in the Herbert River District, Queensland, where it was met with under the name of *Bendi* by the Swedish traveller Lumholtz.

The interesting point, however, in connection with these weapons is that one is like the *Bendi* of Lumholtz, and the other unlike the latter, or any of the intermediate forms, but agrees with the *Marpangye* of Encounter Bay, S.A.

Lumholtz's *Bendi* consists of a very long handle, with the head, or blade, comparatively flat, sharp along the margins, and curving gracefully outwards and upwards to an obtuse point, without any marked degree of enlargement.† The *Marpangye*, on the contrary, is a much rougher and more formidable looking weapon, and consists of a long straight handle with a short, stout, expanded, emu-head shaped blade, inclined slightly downwards to

* Bd. x. 1897, pl. 3.

† Among Cannibals, 1890, p. 234, figs.

the handle, or nearly at right angles to the latter. To find the same form of a highly specialised weapon at two such extreme points as Encounter Bay in South Australia and Ripple Creek in North Queensland is, to say the least, a very interesting point in the distribution of Aboriginal weapons.

The larger and *Marpangye*-like form sent by Mr. Boyd (fig. 3) is two feet five inches long, of which two feet form what may be termed the handle, and is slightly curved. A root seems to have been taken advantage of, both in this instance and in that of the South Australian weapons. Beyond a thinning down of the head it does not seem to have been fabricated in any way, but retains its original rough outline. From the handle, or shaft, the head expands a little and curves over and downwards, with a fanciful resemblance to a bird's head and beak; the handle is ruddled and the head covered with pipeclay. It bears the closest possible resemblance to the *Marpangye* from Encounter Bay, figured by Eyre.*

The second or *Bendi* type of weapon (fig. 4) is two inches shorter in the handle than the preceding, with a less expanded head, that instead of curving downwards is gently inclined forwards and upwards, terminating in a much sharper point; the handle is ruddled but the head is left uncoloured. In shape it approximates nearest to one of Lumholtz's figures previously quoted.† In the case of both weapons the proximal ends are obtusely pointed.

The boomerangs although from Ripple Creek are not made by the Aborigines of that locality, but are probably obtained by the latter from those of the neighbourhood of Townsville, so Mr. Boyd informs me. The *Marpangye* and *Bendi* were made at Ripple Creek by an old black named "Paddy," and are there known as *Buegarrah*.

I am indebted to Mr. C. Hedley's kindness for the drawings.

* Exped. Discovery C. Austr. 1845, ii. t. 3, f. 12; Etheridge Junr., Internat. Archiv für Ethnographie, 1897, x. t. 3, f. 10.

† Lumholtz, *loc. cit.*, p. 234, centre figure; Etheridge Junr., *loc. cit.*, t. 3, f. 21.



Etheridge, Robert and Melo-Costa, Wanessa de. 1899. "Further carved boomerangs, and two varieties of the langeel from north Queensland." *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales* 23, 701–704.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/21753>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/37122>

Holding Institution

MBLWHOI Library

Sponsored by

MBLWHOI Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.