

CHAPTER XI

MESSENGERS AND MESSAGE-STICKS—BARTER AND TRADE CENTRES—GESTURE LANGUAGE

Qualifications of messengers—Ceremonial garb of messengers—Speed with which news travels—The heralds of the Kamilaroi and other tribes—Mode of procedure, and emblems carried by messengers—Message-sticks—Methods of enumeration in different tribes—Kulin message-stick—Kurnai messengers—Chepara message-stick—Tribal expeditions—Dieri Pitcheri party—Expedition for red ochre—The Yantruwunta go 300 miles for sandstone slabs—The Yutchin custom among the Dieri—Trade centres for barter—Bartering at the Wilyaru ceremonies—The Kani-nura ceremonies—Bartering at tribal meetings of the Wotjobaluk, Kulin, and other tribes—Smoke signals and others—Gesture language—Very complete system of the Dieri—Gestures used by various tribes.

In all tribes there are certain men who are, so to say, free of one or more of the adjacent tribes. This arises out of tribal intermarriage; and, indeed, marriages are sometimes arranged for what may be termed "state reasons," that is, in order that there may be means of sending ceremonial communications by some one who can enter and traverse a perhaps unfriendly country, with safety to himself and with security for the delivery of his message. In some cases these ceremonial messengers, as will be seen later on, are women. But the bearing of merely friendly messages within the tribe is usually by a relative of the sender. The message itself is, in other tribes, conveyed by what the whites in certain districts call a "blackfellow's letter"—a message-stick. There has been much misunderstanding, not to say misstatement, as to the real character of these message-sticks, and the conventional value of the markings on them. It has been said that they can be read and understood by the person to whom they are sent without the marks on them

being explained by the bearer. I have even heard it said that persons, other than the one to whom a stick is sent, can read the marks with as much ease as educated people can read the words inscribed on one of our letters.

The subject is important in so far that a right understanding of the method by, and the manner in, which the markings on the sticks are made to convey information, is well calculated to afford some measure of the mental status of the persons using them.

In order to test the questions thus raised, whether these message-sticks do or do not convey information to those receiving them, apart from any explanatory message given by the bearer, I made such personal investigations as were possible, and addressed myself to correspondents in various parts of Australia, to a number of whom my best thanks are due for the trouble they took to inform me.

Following the same plan as in the other chapters, I commence with the Dieri tribe. The particulars relate to their customs, while they were in their primitive condition, nearly forty years ago. They did not use the message-stick, but sent only messages by word of mouth. It was not necessary, as with some tribes, that certain messages, for instance, those relating to the initiation ceremonies, should be carried by a man of the same totem as the sender. Messages are sent to gather people together for dancing corroborees, from distances of over one hundred miles, and a messenger for such a purpose is painted with red ochre, and wears a head-dress of feathers.

In calling people together for the *Wilyaru* or *Mindari* ceremonies, the messengers are painted with diagonal stripes of yellow ochre, and have their beards tied to a point. They carry a token made of emu feathers, tied tightly with string and shaped like a Prince of Wales feather. The sending of a handful of red ochre tied up in a small bundle signifies the great *Mindari* or peace ceremony. In giving notice of the ceremony of circumcision, the messenger takes a handful of charcoal, and places a piece of it in the mouth of each person, without saying a word. This is fully understood to mean the "making of young men."

Any tokens used for giving notice of the initiation ceremonies are not allowed to be shown to women, girls, or boys.

A messenger sent to form a *Pinya* wears a kind of net

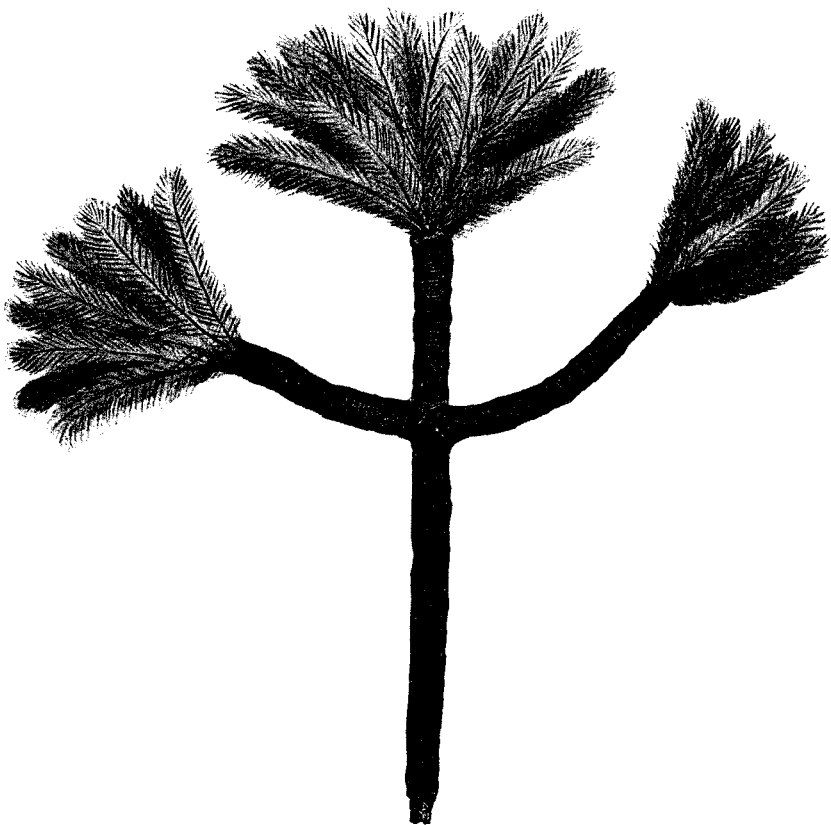


FIG. 41.—TOKEN WORN BY MESSENGER, WILYARU CEREMONY. DIERI TRIBE. $\times \frac{1}{2}$.

on the head and a white band round it, in which is stuck a feather. He is painted with yellow ochre and pipe-clay, and bears a bunch of emu feathers stuck in the string girdle at his spine. He carries part of the beard of the deceased or some balls of pipe-clay taken from the heads of those mourning for him. These are shown to the persons to

whom he is sent, and are at once understood as a call to form a *Pinya*, to avenge a death by evil magic.

A messenger who is sent to announce a death is smeared all over with pipe-clay. On his approach to the camp the women commence screaming and crying passionately. After a time the particulars of the death are made public to the camp, and it is only those nearly related to the deceased who weep. Even old men cry bitterly, and their friends console them as if they were children. On the following morning the relatives paint themselves over with

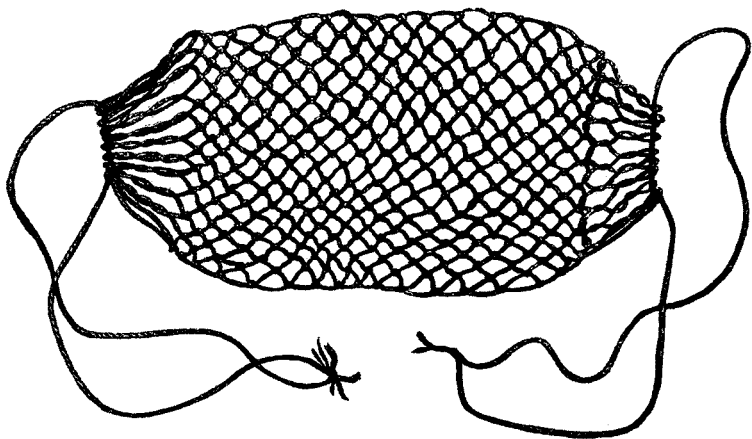


FIG. 42.—HEAD-NET WORN BY MESSENGER TO CALL A PINYA. DIERI TRIBE. $\times \frac{1}{3}$.

white pipe-clay. Widows and widowers are prohibited from speaking until all this clay has worn off, however long it may remain on them. They do not rub it off, as doing so would, they believe, be followed by evil consequences to themselves. It must absolutely wear off by itself, and during this period they communicate with others by gesture language.

If the message is to call together a meeting of the elder men of the tribe, the messenger is some noted old man, nominated by the *Pinnaru* (Headman) who sent the message. The same would be the case when neighbouring tribes are invited to attend the ceremonies of initiation. But in any other matter which might be attended by danger, or where treachery is feared, it is not men but women who are sent.

The most important messages sent by the Dieri to neighbouring tribes are those relating to disputes between them. For such purposes women are chosen, and if possible such women as belong to the tribe to which the embassy, if it may be so called, is sent. Women are chosen in such a case for two reasons: first, because they are going to a tribe in which they have near relations; and second, because it would be less likely that they would be treacherously made away with than men.

Forty years ago these women were usually the wives of Headmen of the *Murdus* (totems), and occasionally one of the wives of the principal Headman, *Jalina-piramurana*, was among them.

The women are accompanied by their *Pirraurus*, for the Dieri consider that on such a mission a man would be more complaisant as regards the acts of his *Pirrauru* wife than as regards those of his *Tippa-malku* wife. For on such occasions it is thoroughly understood that the women are to use every influence in their power to obtain a successful issue for their mission, and are therefore free of their favours. After what I have said in the earlier part of this work as to the class rules, it is perhaps hardly necessary to say here that in these cases the class rules are obeyed.

If the mission is successful, there is a time of licence between its members and the tribe, or part of a tribe, to which it has been sent. This is always the case, and if the Dieri women failed in it, it would be at peril of death on their return. This licence is not regarded with any jealousy by the women of the tribe to which the mission is sent. It is taken as a matter of course. They know of it, but do not see it, as it occurs at a place apart from the camp.

The members of such a mission are treated as distinguished guests. Food is provided for them, and on their return home, after about a week's stay, they are loaded with presents. If the mission is unsuccessful, messages of dreadful threatening are sent back by them.

The mode of announcing a mission, whether by male or female messengers, is by telling it to the *Pinnaru* of the camp, when alone, as soon as the former arrive. Nothing is

then said to any one; but when all the people are in the camp about the time of going to rest, the *Pinnaru* announces the visit. There is then an excited discussion on it, if it be a matter of moment or general interest, for an hour or two; to be again resumed at daybreak, and so on, night and morning, for a day or two, until some definite determination is arrived at.

The arguments of the old men who speak are noted by the messengers, and on their return they repeat as nearly as they are able the popular sentiments of the tribe.¹

Mr. Gason has described to me how he was present on several occasions on the return of a mission which had been entrusted to women. The Headman and the principal old men received them kindly, and congratulated them on their safe return, but appeared anxious, and clutched their spears in an excited manner. No one but the Headman spoke to the women immediately on their return; but when all the men were seated, they were questioned as to the result of their mission. The result was at once told to all the people in the camp, who rejoiced if it were favourable, but who became fearfully excited and seemed to lose all control over themselves if it had failed, rushing to and fro, yelling, throwing sand into the air, biting themselves, and brandishing their weapons in the wildest manner imaginable.

In cases where such a mission had been successful, women of the other tribe usually accompanied it back, to testify its approval by their tribe. Agreements so made are probably observed as faithfully as are many treaties more formally made by civilised people.

During my expedition to the north of Cooper's Creek an attempt was made by some of the Yaurorka tribe to surprise my camp at night. As it was most important for the success of my expedition that I should be on friendly terms with the people of the Barcoo delta, I went on the following morning to their camp, which was near at hand on the same water, taking with me my black boy, who spoke their language, and at an interview with the old men, apart from the others, I cautioned them against in any way molesting

¹ S. Gason, also O. Siebert.

us, who were travelling peaceably in their country. I told them that if I found blackfellows prowling about my camp at night, I should certainly shoot them after this notice.

After some discussion the old men promised that none of their people should go near our camp at night, and that when doing so in the daytime they would lay down their arms at a little distance, and on my part I promised not to do them any hurt. I must say that this agreement was kept by them; and I observed that not only they but their fellow-tribesmen also in future laid down their weapons when visiting us. This corroborates Mr. Gason's statement that the Dieri keep to the agreements which they make.

As the Dieri send missions to the surrounding tribes, so do these also send them to the Dieri when occasion requires, and the proceedings are such as I have described.

It may be noted here that a Dieri man of no note or influence, arriving at a camp as a messenger, sits down near to it without saying anything. After remaining a few minutes in silence, the old men gather round him, and ask whence he comes and what has befallen him. He then delivers his message and details his news. Two of the old men then stand up, one retailing the message and the other repeating it in an excited manner. The newcomer, if he is a friendly stranger, is hospitably entertained, living in the hut of some man of the same totem as himself.

I remember an instance of such a visit when I was camped close to a small number of Yaurorka, some distance to the north of Cooper's Creek, with whom I was on friendly terms under the agreement spoken of. A stranger had arrived from the south, and so far as I remember, was a Dieri. I could watch all their movements by the light of their fire, and hear what was spoken in a loud tone, for we were separated only by a deep though narrow water channel. They spent the evening in great feasting, and the women were busy till late at night in pounding and grinding seeds for food. The stranger related his news, and it was repeated in a loud tone to the listening tribesmen sitting or standing at their fires. I was unable to understand more than the general meaning of the announcements, but my

black boy, who was acquainted with the Dieri speech, explained that this man was a "walkabout blackfellow," in other words, a messenger who was telling them his news.

Messengers from time to time arrived at that branch of the Yantruwunta tribe which lived where I had established my depot, and with whom I was on the best of terms. The old men, the *Pinnarus*, told me on several occasions that a messenger had arrived from beyond the "great stones," or stony country, that is, Sturt's Stony Desert, bringing news of the *Whil-pra-pinnaru*, meaning the explorer M'Kinlay.¹ They first reported that he was surrounded by flood waters, and, after some time, that the waters had fallen and that he had "thrown away" his cart, and was gone northwards they knew not where. These messengers came from the tribe living about where Birdsville is situated. The account given of M'Kinlay's movements was correct, and I afterwards saw the country which had been flooded. This shows how news is carried from one tribe to another, in this case for a distance of about a hundred and fifty miles at least.

A man of influence, arriving at a camp of a friendly tribe, is received with raised weapons by the inmates, as if in defiance. Upon this the visitor rushes towards them, making a pretence of striking them, they warding off his feints with their shields. Immediately after this they embrace him and lead him to his camp, where the women shortly after bring him food.²

During my exploration on the southern side of Sturt's Desert, in the country of the Ngurawola tribe, I had a good opportunity of observing the manner in which a party of strangers is received. On arriving at a shouting distance of a camp of that tribe my guide, a Yantruwunta man, halted us and, breaking off a branch of a tree, which he held up in his right hand, went nearer to a group of old men who had come forward and stood at a little distance

¹ M'Kinlay received this name from the blacks at the outlying cattle stations of South Australia. Any wheeled vehicle is there called in the blacks' "pidgin English" a *whil-pra*, that is, a wheel-barrow, *Pinnaru* being Headman, or leader. The name followed him on from tribe to tribe.

² O. Siebert.

in advance of their camp. The guide, waving his branch at arm's-length, said, in a loud tone of voice, that we were travelling peaceably (*Barku-balkala*). Then followed a loud-toned conversation between him and the *Pinnarus* of the camp. Being at length satisfied, they came towards us, and led us to a place adjoining a water-channel, on the farther side of which they were encamped in a cluster of bee-hived-shaped grass huts. Here we were told to camp, and some of their young men were sent to gather wood for our fire.

In this manner I was taken during several days from camp to camp in the country bordering Sturt's Desert and Lake Lipson.

In the Wiimbaio tribe a messenger of death walks in a dejected manner on nearing a camp, holding his spear in one hand and letting it rest in the hollow of the other arm. When close to the camp he says "*Dau*" (death) twice, which is the formula suited to the occasion. His face is painted with a little pipe-clay. He walks through the encampment, repeating the word "*Dau*" at each hut, before he sits down, apart from the others, waiting till some friend brings him some food. After a time he again goes into the camp and delivers his news.

It is always possible to tell by the appearance of the messenger what the kind of news it is, whether of death, of fighting, or of elopements.¹

In the Ngarigo tribe a message was called *Mabun*, and a messenger *Gunumilli*. He might be any one chosen by the old men or the Headman.

A messenger who merely carried a verbal message from some person to another would probably carry with it a ball, made of strips of opossum pelt rolled tightly together, as a friendly token from the sender.

A man was chosen as messenger for tribal matters who had relatives at the place to which he was to go.

The man who acted as messenger between myself and the Murring Headmen about the holding of the initiation ceremonies was the Headman of the Snowy River clan of

¹ Dr. M'Kinlay.

the Kurnai, but his mother was a Ngarigo woman. He was therefore free of her tribe, and was the recognised means of communication between the Krauatungalung and the Ngarigo. He spent his time mostly between the two places, and had thus become known to the Yuin and attended their ceremonies.

If the message related to a corroboree, the Ngarigo messenger carried a man's kilt (*Buran*), a head-band (*Ngunumila*), and nose-peg (*Elangantu*). If it related to an expiatory fight, he carried a shield for spear-fighting (*Birkumba*); but if it was to call a war-party together, he carried a jag-spear (*Jerumbuddi*). In relation to the initiation ceremonies the token was a bull-roarer (*Mudji*) and also a spear, boomerang, and shield. A messenger carrying the tidings of the death of some person had his face painted with a white streak from each eye down to the lower jaw.

In the Wiradjuri tribe there is a Headman for each totem, who is the oldest man of the name. Important messages, such as those relating to the *Burbung* ceremonies, are sent by a Headman. The messenger must be of the same totem as the sender, and the message is sent to the oldest man in the same totem in the locality to which the messenger goes. This oldest man is the head of his totem at that place. In one case within my knowledge, such a message was sent by a Headman of the *Kubbi* sub-class and the red kangaroo totem, and his messenger was of the same sub-class and totem. The message is thus sent on by men of the same totem from place to place.

All kinds of messages are sent on in this manner, and the messengers are regarded as sacred, and may safely travel anywhere, so long as they possess the proper sign or emblem of their office.

The practice of the Kamilaroi tribes may be taken as that of the tribe which lived nearest to Maitland in New South Wales, about fifty years back. In each clan there was one man who was the herald, and had an official designation. He was well known in all the adjoining tribes, and could go in safety between them, even when

they were at war. When sent as an envoy to the enemies' camp, he might have to wait for a night to bring back a message from them. While there, he made a camp by himself, a little distance from their encampment. These heralds, being well known, did not need to carry any badge or emblem of office; but if a black was employed as a white man's messenger, the message was written on a piece of paper which was fastened in the end of a split stick. Carrying this before him, he might pass safely through an enemy's country, because he was seen to be the white man's messenger, and if any harm were done to him, the tribe of the white man would be very angry.¹

As a curious parallel to this, I may mention that when returning from Cooper's Creek into the settlements of South Australia, a young man of the Yaurorka tribe, who had attached himself to me, accompanied my party to a stage beyond Blanch-water. To ensure him good treatment by any white man he might meet on his way through the settlements, I wrote a sort of passport which I folded up and put into the end of a stick. I explained to him what it was, and when he sorrowfully started on his long journey he carried the stick perpendicularly in his hand in front of himself, as a sort of talisman which would ensure safety.

In 1862 a messenger arrived at the blacks' camp at Ningy Gully station, on the Moonie River in Southern Queensland, bringing a message about the Boorool *Bora*, or Big *Bora*. This is in the Wollaroi or Yualaroi country, the language being akin to the Kamilaroi. The messenger, one of the lesser *Koradjis*, approached the camp as the sun was sinking. The two oldest men in the camp met him, and made his fire. The message-stick which he carried was ornamented with paint and cockatoo down, and he himself was in war-paint, with feather head-dress. He came from the *Bora* ground, near the New South Wales border, where the Headmen were. He had also a bull-roarer, and that night, when there was a corroboree, it was sounded. The same occurred at each station up the

¹ C. Naseby.

river, as he proceeded, for each station fed regularly six to twelve blacks, the men riding after cattle, the women herding milkers, washing, etc. Other messengers were sent on the same business in other directions.¹

The means of communication by the Geawe-gal and neighbouring, and even more distant, tribes was by persons having the character of heralds. Their persons were sacred even among hostile tribes. From occasional residences in distant places many of them acquired different dialects fluently. Other men, engaged in affairs of less moment, may be termed "special messengers." They also were respected scrupulously, but perhaps their persons were not so sacred as those of the heralds, under certain conditions, and their journeys were made in safer territories. A herald would be selected for dangerous latitudes.²

With the Gringai a messenger can pass in safety from one tribe to another. The red-coloured net which is worn round the forehead is usually an emblem for calling the tribe together. When a messenger is within sound of the camp to which he is sent, he gives a particular "coo-ee," when all hearing it assemble to hear what he has to say, but not a word is spoken to him till he thinks it proper to unburden his message, and sometimes he sits quite silent for a long time. When, however, he unburdens his mind, his eloquence is wonderful, and he is listened to with the greatest attention. No message-sticks were used in this tribe.³

My Jajaurung informant, whose father married a woman of the Jupagalk tribe, and whose maternal grandmother was of the Leitchi-leitchi tribe, was one of those men who were sent on important messages. He was free of three tribes, first on account of his father, who lived with the Jupagalk, also on account of his mother and grandmother, as well as of his own tribe the Jajaurung. Thus he became a messenger and intermediary between these tribes. His mother's sister was married to a Jajaurung man who lived at Charlotte Plains, and her son took care of a stone quarry at that place, from which the tribes to the

¹ E. R. Vernon.

² G. W. Rusden.

³ J. W. Boydell.

north-west were supplied with axe-heads. My informant on one occasion brought down word that the Wotjobaluk, at Lake Hindmarsh, were in want of stone for axes, and this material was obtained from the quarry, and carried up to the next great meeting of the tribes on the Wimmera for barter by my informant's father. This man was not only an intermediary, like his son, but also a great medicine-man, for it was he whom I mentioned elsewhere as having taken up the challenge of the settler at Morton's Plains to make rain and fill his new dam.

In the Wotjobaluk tribes messages are sent from the old men by chosen messengers. This is also the case in other tribes of the same nation.

In the tribes of South-west Victoria there were messengers attached to each tribe who were selected for their intelligence and their ability as linguists. They were employed to carry information from one tribe to another, regarding the time and place of great meetings, corroborees, marriages, burials, and proposed battles.

Persons carrying these messages are considered sacred when on duty, and to distinguish them from others, they generally travel two together, and are painted according to the nature of the message, so that their appearance denotes the nature of their news before they come to the camp. On arriving at the camp, they sit down without speaking, apparently unobserved, and after a time one of them delivers a short speech, with intoned voice.¹

It was not necessary in the Kurnai tribe that the message should be carried by any particular person, but generally the messenger was one of the younger men related to the sender. In important matters affecting the tribe, messengers were sent by the *Gweraeil-kurnai*, or Headman, on his own authority, or more frequently after consulting with the old men.

In the Chepara tribe messages were sent on tribal matters by a Headman, or, if of great importance, by the principal Headman. When such a message was sent, it was by a messenger called *Buira*, who was usually the

¹ J. Dawson, *op. cit.* p. 72.

sister's son, or sister's daughter's son (*Kanil*), or a similar near relative of the sender.¹

In the tribes about Maryborough (Queensland), when it has been decided to hold a *Dora* (initiation ceremonies), the old man at whose instance they are to be held calls for a party to carry the message. This consists of from six to ten men, under the guidance of one or two old men, who know the country to which they are to go. They travel secretly, not being protected by their office, and only announce their arrival at a camp when so near that a signal made by striking two boomerangs together can be heard. This signal is immediately understood, and the old men go out and receive them. For the time they are exempted from any party feuds. They carry with them on their return journey only fire-stick, tomahawk, boomerang, spear, and shield, but no rugs or coverings.²

A messenger is chosen by the Wakelbura who has a number of friends in the tribe to which he is sent, or which he is instructed to bring back with him. Should such a messenger be injured or killed in a quarrel, in which he was not the aggressor, his tribe would in turn injure or kill the man who did it. This vengeance would be carried out by the messenger's father's and mother's brothers. If the injury was such as to form the subject of a set fight, the weapons would be knives, which were in the olden time of stone, but latterly of part of a shear blade or butcher's knife fixed with a handle.³

Messengers are sent by the Buntamurra to call other tribes to fight or for other purposes, and message-sticks are used for the purpose.⁴

MESSAGE-STICKS

The use of message-sticks appears to have been common in the tribes inhabiting the country through which the Darling River flows. The following particulars relate to the tribes of the Itchumundi nation.

¹ J. Gibson.

² Harry E. Aldridge.

³ J. C. Muirhead.

⁴ J. H. Kirkham.

Message-sticks can be sent by any one. The marks placed on the sticks are an aid to memory. The numbers 1 and 2 in Fig. 44 represent a message-stick sent to inform the Kongait tribe that the Tongaranka intended holding an initiation ceremony, and inviting their attendance. The notches on No. 1 have the following explanation, counting from the top :—

1. Jumba = make young men.
2. Yantoru = sticks for knocking out teeth.
3. Purtali = small bull-roarer.
4. Bungumbelli = large bull-roarer.
5. Not explained.
6. (Large notch) Tallyera = marking with red ochre.

On No. 2 the notches refer to different localities from which the blacks are to come to Yancannia, which is the larger notch.

Nos. 3 and 4 represent another Tongaranka stick, from the son of the Headman to a man at Tarella. The message was to tell him that the sender, his brothers, and two old men were at a certain water-hole, and wished him to bring his son to be initiated, as there were two other boys ready for the ceremony. In 3 the large notch is the recipient of the message, and the three smaller ones his son and the other boys. The group of three notches in No. 4 represent the sender of the stick and his two brothers, while the two small cuts are the old men.

No. 5 represents a message-stick sent by a man of the Tongaranka tribe, inviting two of his friends at a distance to come and see him, as his wife was ill and could not travel. The lower notch represents the sender, and the two others the men invited.

This message-stick is made of part of a small branch of a tree, and is wrapped round with a few strands of a man's kilt, with which article of man's attire the boy is invested after initiation. The whole is tied up in about two feet of the cord made of twisted opossum fur, which the novice wears for a time, after his initiation, as evidence of his having been made a "young man."¹

¹ J. W. Boulton.

The message-stick was known and made use of by the Ngarigo, but not to such an extent as by other tribes. It was a piece of wood a few inches long, with notches at the edges which referred to the message with which the bearer was entrusted.

About the year 1840 my friend, the late Mr. A. M. McKeachie, met two young men of the Ngarigo tribe at the Snowy River, near to Barnes's Crossing; one of them carried two peeled sticks each about two feet long, and with notches cut in them, which they told him reminded them of their message. The sticks were about one half-inch in diameter. Their message was that they were to collect their tribe to meet those of the Tumut River and Queanbeyan, at a place in the Bogong Mountains, to eat the Bogong moths.¹

A messenger in the Wiradjuri tribe is provided with a message-stick, the notches on which remind him of his message, and if it is to call the people together for initiation ceremonies, he carries a bull-roarer (*Bobu* or *Mudjigang*), a belt (*Gulir*), a man's kilt (*Buran* or *Tala-bulg*) made of kangaroo-rat skin, a head-string (*Ulungau-ir*), and a white head-band (*Kambrun*). The messenger having made known his message to the man to whom he is sent, and delivered his message with the other emblems above mentioned, the recipient assembles the men at the council-place (*Ngulubul*). He then shows them the message-stick and other articles, and delivers to them the message which he has received. Sometimes, when the kilt is sent, the strands of skin forming it are used instead of a notched stick, to remind the bearer of his message.

The recipient of the message-stick sends it on, with all the articles which he has received, by one of his own people, and it thus travels until the farthest point is reached.

¹ A great gathering usually took place about midsummer on the highest ranges of the Australian Alps, where sometimes from 500 to 700 aborigines, belonging to different friendly tribes, would assemble almost solely to feast on roasted moths (*Bogong*). The moths were thickly congregated in the crevices of the rocks, and were stifled with smouldering brush. Being roasted on the hot ashes, they were shrivelled to about the size of a grain of wheat. The taste of the roasted *Bogongs* is said to be sweetish and rather pleasant eating. ("The Omeo Blacks," by Richard Helms, *op. cit.* p. 387).

In the Yualaroi tribe men not specially appointed carry pieces of wood with marks on them from one person to another, but they have to explain what these marks mean.¹

The messengers of the Wakelbura tribe carry message-sticks, the marks on which do not convey their meaning without verbal explanation. The man who presents the stick explains what the various markings mean. If the stick were sent by a man of the Malera class, it and everything marked on it would also be Malera. The stick shown on Fig. 45, Nos. 1 and 2, was sent from sub-class *Obu* to *Obu*, the stick being itself of *Gidya* wood, which is *Wutheru-Obu*, and the game is Wutheru, but, being wallaby, might be of either the *Obu* or *Wungo* sub-class. The message-stick was sent by a *Tarrima* of the Wakelbura tribe to one of the Yangebura tribe at Blackall. The message referred to game which was to be found in abundance within a wire fence erected near Clermont, and was to invite the Yangebura to come and kill game there. Such message-sticks are always painted; this one was coloured red and blue.²

In the case of a message sent by the Turrbal tribe to call another tribe to come to an expiatory combat, a message-stick sent would be marked with certain notches, which the messenger in delivering it would explain in the following manner. Pointing to a certain set of notches, he would say, for instance, "There are the men of a big division of the Wide Bay Tribe, who are coming to see us, to have this fight about one of their people whose death they blame you for." Pointing to another set of notches, he would say, "These other people are coming to help them. This stick is sent you by the great man who sent me, and who says that you are to meet him, at such and such a place. You are to send word on, and tell your friends or the other tribes to come and help you."

The messenger who is sent to call people for a *Dora* ceremony not only carries a message-stick, but also a bull-roarer, to show to the old men.³

¹ R. M. Crowthers.

² J. C. Muirhead.

³ Harry E. Aldridge.

In the tribes within fifty miles of Maryborough (Queensland), the sender of a message-stick makes it in the presence of his messenger and explains it to him. If the messenger cannot deliver it, he in his turn explains it to some other man who undertakes to deliver it. If shown to a man to whom it has not been explained, he may say, "I know this means something, but I do not know what it means."

The following will give an idea of the manner in which a message-stick is prepared and used in these tribes. It is figured in Fig. 44, No. 10.

It is assumed to be from a blackfellow living at some place distant twenty to thirty miles from where some friend is camped, to whom the sender desires to inform of the following message: "I am here, five camps distant from you. In such and such a time I will go and see you. There are so and so with me here. Send me some flour, tea, sugar, and tobacco. How are Bulkoin and his wife and Bunda?"

Having his messenger beside him he would make the marks shown.

Five notches represent the five camps (stages), distance to the recipient; a flat place cut on the stick shows a break in the message; ten notches the time after which the sender will visit his friend; eight notches the eight people camped with the sender; four notches the articles asked for; another flat place on the stick shows another break in the message; and three notches the three persons asked after. Having made these marks, and having explained them to the messenger, he carves the ends of the stick to make it look ornamental, and gives it to him for delivery.¹

The Headmen of a branch of the Wotjobaluk tribe having consulted and decided that, for instance, some other part of the tribe should be summoned to meet them on some special occasion, the principal man among them prepares a message-stick by making notches on it with a knife. In the old times this was done with a sharp flint or a mussel shell. The man who is to be charged with the message looks on while this is being done, and he thus

¹ Harry E. Aldridge.

receives his message, and learns the reference which the marks on the stick have to it. A notch is made at one end to indicate the sender, and probably also notches for

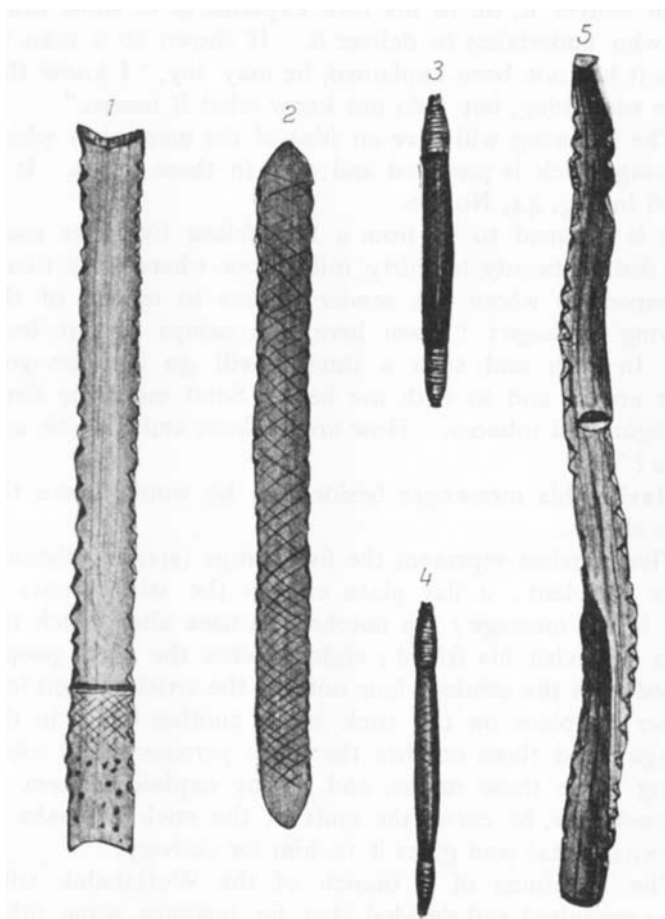


FIG. 43.—MESSAGE-STICKS OF WURUNJERRI, NARRINYERI, GOURNDITCH-MARA, AND WOTJOBALUK TRIBES. $\times \frac{2}{3}$.

those who join him in sending the message. A large notch is made on one side for each tribal group which is invited to attend. If all the people are invited to attend, then the stick is notched from end to end. If very few are invited, a notch is made for each individual, as he is named to the

messenger. The illustration, Fig. 43, No. 5, represents one of these sticks, which was made to convey an invitation from the Headman of the Gromilluk horde to the Yarik-kulluk horde at Lake Coorong, both being local divisions of the Wotjobaluk tribe. All the people were invited to attend. The three notches at the upper end on the right-hand side show the sender and his friends, who were the principal Gromilluk men. The large notch represents the Yarik-killuk horde and its Headman, to whom the message was sent. The notches continuing along the edge to the end and along the other edge indicate all the people of the horde being invited.

The oldest man having made such a message-stick, hands it to the next oldest man, who inspects it, and, if necessary, adds some further marks and gives corresponding instructions. Finally the stick, having passed from one to the other of the old men, is handed to the messenger, who has been duly told off for this duty, and he is informed at the same time when the visitors will be expected to arrive. The enumeration of the days, or the stages of the journey of the visitors, is made in the following manner. Commencing at one little finger, the enumeration is as follows:—

1. *Giti-munya*, or little hand, that is, the little finger.
2. *Gaiup-munya*, from *gaiup*, one, and *munya*, a hand; the third finger.
3. *Marung-munya*, from *Marung*, the desert pine (*Callitris verucosa*). The middle finger, being longer than the others, is like that tree, which is taller than the other trees growing in the Wotjo country.
4. *Yollop-yollop-munya*, from *yollop*, to point or aim at; thus *yollop-bit*, the act of aiming a spear, as by the fore-finger being used as a throwing-stick; the fore-finger.
5. *Bap-munya*, from *bap*, mother, therefore mother of the hand; the thumb.
6. *Dart-gur*, from *dart*, a hollow, and *gur*, the fore-arm; the hollow formed by the end of the radius and the wrist.
7. *Boi-bun*, a small swelling, *i.e.* the swelling of the flexor muscle of the fore-arm.
8. *Bun-dari*, a hollow, *i.e.* the inside of the elbow-joint.
9. *Gengen-dartchuk*, from *gengen*, to tie, and *dartchuk*,

the upper arm. This is the name of the place where the armlet of opossum pelt is tied round the biceps for ornament.

10. *Borporung*, the point of the shoulder.

11. *Jarak-gourn*, from *jarak*, a reed, and *gourn*, the neck. This refers to the place where the reed necklace is worn.

12. *Nerup-wrembul*, from *nerup*, the butt, as *nerup-galk*, the butt or base of a tree, and *wrembul*, the ear.

13. *Wurt-wrembul*, from *wurt*, above, and also behind, and *wrembul*, the ear; that is, the head above and just behind the ear.

14. *Doke-doke*, from *doka*, to move, *i.e.* "that which moves," being the muscle which can be seen when in the act of eating.

15. *Det-det*, hard. This is the crown of the head. From this place the count goes down the other side by corresponding places.

This method of counting seems to do away with the often-repeated statement that the Australian aborigines are unable to count beyond four or at the most five. By the above manner of counting they are able to reckon up to thirty, with names for each place.

The messenger carries the message-stick in a net bag, and on arriving at the camp to which he is sent, he hands it to the Headman, at some place apart from the others, saying, "So and so sends you this," and he then gives his message, referring as he does so to the marks on the stick; and, if his message requires it, also to the time in days, or the stages to be made, in the manner already pointed out.

The Headman, having examined the message-stick, hands it to the other old men, and having satisfied himself how many people are wanted, and how many hordes are to be present, and having made such further inquiries as seem necessary, calls all the people together and announces the message to them.

This kind of message-stick, called *galk*, that is, wood or stick, may be seen by any one. It is retained by the

recipient, who carries it back to the meeting to which he has been called. The messenger lives in the camp with some of his friends, until they all depart to the meeting, when he accompanies them.

Such a messenger would never be interfered with. No one would think of injuring a man who brings news of important matters. But if any one were to molest him, the whole of the people would take the matter up, and especially his own friends. The messenger does not carry anything emblematical of his mission beyond the stick, even when carrying a message calling a meeting for an expiatory combat, or for a *Ganitch*, the initiation ceremony. But when conveying news of death, he smears his face with pipe-clay in token of his message.

In the Gournditch-mara tribe message-sticks were used. Nos. 3 and 4 of Fig. 43 are two which were used probably thirty or forty years ago. The ends of such sticks were tied round with fine twine or sinews. If sent to a friendly tribe, it would be an invitation to a feast and dancing corroboree, and would be wrapped up in a piece of kangaroo skin. If, however, it were sent as a call to attend a fight or a raid on another tribe, the messenger carried a barbed spear, in the point of which two emu feathers were fixed.¹

In the tribes of south-western Victoria a meeting of the adjacent friendly tribes was called by the Headman sending two messengers to the Headman of the nearest tribe, bearing a message-stick, about six inches long and one inch in diameter, with five or six sides, one of these indicating by notches the number of tribes to be summoned, and the others the number of men required from each. The messengers do not explain the business of the proposed meeting. Immediately a Headman receives the message he sends for his principal men, who pass their hands down the stick and ascertain the number of men required from the tribe. They then decide who are to be sent. The stick is next forwarded by messengers from their tribe to the nearest Headman, who sends it on to the next, and so on till all are summoned. The most distant tribe starts first, and joining the others in

¹ J. H. Stähle.

succession, all arrive in a body in the camp of the Headman who sent for them.

The spear-thrower is also used as a message-stick, but when so employed it is specially marked to indicate its purpose.

As an instance of the procedure of the tribes of the Kulin nation, I take that of the Wurunjerri.

It was the Headman who sent out messengers (*Wirrigiri*) to collect people for festive occasions, for ceremonial or expiatory fights, or for other matters concerning the tribe, and he did this after consulting with the other old men. The messenger was usually one of the younger men, and if possible one whose sister was married to some one in that place to which he was to go, for under such circumstances a man could go and return in safety, being protected by his friends and connections. Messengers were chosen who were not implicated in any blood-feud. People were always pleased to receive news, and no messenger known as such was ever injured.

The message-stick, called *Mungu* or *Kalk* (wood) or *Barndana* (that is, "mark it"), was made by the sender, and was retained by the recipient of the message as a reminder of what he had to do, perhaps to meet the sender at a certain time and place, or to meet and feast on fish or game. For friendly meetings, when there was no quarrel or danger, the messenger carried a man's belt (*Branjep*), and a woman's apron (*Kaiung*) hung upon a reed. For meetings to settle quarrels or grievances, such as a bodily injury inflicted, or the death of some one by evil magic, by a set combat, or to concert an attack on another tribe, the *Branjep* was hung upon a jag-spear made of ironbark wood,¹ and when calling a meeting for the initiation of boys (*Talangun*), the messenger carried also a bull-roarer and a man's kilt hung upon a reed. The bull-roarer was kept secret from the sight of women or children.

If the message was to call the people together for a corroboree or for ball-playing, a ball made of opossum pelt, cut in strips and rolled up tightly, was sent. This was

¹ *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*.

called *Mangurt*, and was sent also from one person to another as a friendly mark of regard. For ball-playing, the ball, made from the scrotum of an old-man kangaroo, stuffed with dry grass, was also sent.

The place of meeting being named in the message, which the messenger "carried in his mouth," it might be further necessary to indicate the day on which the people should assemble, and this was done, as with the Wotjobaluk, by enumerating parts of the human body, commencing with the little finger of one hand. The names of these enumerations are as follows :—

1. *Bubupi-muningya*, the child of the hand, the little finger.

2. *Bulato-ravel*, a little larger, the third finger.

3. *Bulato*, larger, the middle finger.

4. *Urnung-meluk*, from *Urnung*, a direction, and *Meluk*, a large grub found in some eucalypti; the forefinger.

5. *Babungyi-muningya*, the mother of the hand, the thumb.

6. *Krael*, the wrist-joint.

7. *Ngurumbul*, a fork, the divergence of the radial tendons.

8. *Jeraubil*, the swelling of the radial muscles.

9. *Thambur*, a round place, the inside of the elbow-joint.

10. *Berbert*, the ringtail opossum. Also the name of the armlet made from the pelt of that animal, hence the name of the biceps round which the armlet is worn on festive occasions.

11. *Wulung*, the shoulder-joint.

12. *Krakerap*, the bag place, the place where the bag hangs by its band, *i.e.* the collar-bone.

13. *Gurnbert*, the reed necklace, the neck, or place where the reed necklace is worn.

14. *Kurnagor*, the point or end of a hill, or of a spur or ridge, hence the lobe of the ear.

15. *Ngarabul*, a range or the ridge of a hill, hence the side suture of the skull.

16. *Bundial*, the cutting-place, *i.e.* the place where the

mourner cuts himself with some sharp instrument, from *Budagra*, "to cut," e.g. *Budagit-kalk*, "cut the log." This is the top of the head. From this place the count follows the equivalents on the other side.

The message-stick, Fig. 43, No. 1, is one which Berak made to show what they were like as used by his tribe formerly. The explanation is as follows. The notches on the upper end at the left hand of the stick represent the sender and other old men with him. The remainder of the stick being notched along the whole of the two sides, means that all the men of both localities are to be present. The markings on the flat side, at the lower end, are only for ornament, as are also the crescent-shaped ends of the stick. This message is an invitation to some people at a distance to come to a corroboree.

The Jajaurung counted the number of days or camps in the same manner as the Wotjobaluk and Wurunjerri, thus showing that this system was probably universal among the tribes of, at any rate, the Wotjo and Kulin nations. But the Wudthaurung tribe, about Geelong, with which Buckley lived for over thirty years, had, according to him, a different method. He says that a messenger came from another tribe saying they were to meet them some miles off. Their method of describing time is by signs on the fingers, one man of each party marking his days by chalking on the arm and then rubbing one off as each day passes. Elsewhere he says that before he left a certain place, a *Bihar* or messenger came to them. He had his arms striped with red clay to denote the number of days it would take them to reach the tribe he came from. On another occasion, when a large party left on a distant hunting excursion, they marked their arms in the usual manner with stripes to denote how many days they would be absent; and one of the men who remained did the same, rubbing off one mark each day, to denote the lapse of time.¹

I have seen counting done by the Kulin by the hand combined with the other method. The little finger being *Kambo* or one, the third finger *Benjero* or two, the middle

¹ Morgan, *op. cit.* pp. 35, 49, 61.

finger *Kambo-ba-benjero*, three, the forefinger *Benjero-ba-benjero*, four, and the thumb *Benjero-ba-benjero-ba-kanbo*, five. The enumeration was then carried on in the manner described, commencing with *Krauel*, the wrist-joint.

In the Narrang-ga tribe meetings of the elders are called together by messengers who carry message-sticks. The messengers are chosen by the principal Headman, or in matters of local importance by the Headman of the locality, or the Headman who had initiated the proceedings in question. If a reply is required, the same or some other messenger will carry it back, sometimes with a message-stick, but very often by word of mouth only. There is apparently no rule as to the return message.

When a part of the tribe is at a distance, and the Headman wishes some of them to return to him, he sends a message-stick, on which he cuts a notch representing himself and others for the old men next to him in authority. These are cut on the upper edge of the stick, while the notches cut on the other edge represent the number of people he wants to come to him.

The message-stick is called *Mank*, and is rolled up in the skin of any kind of animal. At the present time a handkerchief is commonly used. If the message is a challenge to fight, the messenger in handing the message-stick says, "*Dudla*," which means fight. If the message is one calling people together for a dancing corroboree, a piece of wood is used, marked in a special manner, which is understood without further explanation. In Fig. 44, Nos. 6 and 7 represent the two sides of such a stick. In 6, which is a message about a dancing corroboree, the four notches on the upper part of the right-hand edge represent four old men who are invited to attend, those lower down are the women, and those on the left-hand edge represent the men who accompany the old men. In 7 the notch at the upper part of the right-hand edge is the sender of the message, the three at the bottom are singers, and the intermediate notches represent the women. The notches along the edge at the opposite side are the men of the tribe. Nos. 8 and 9 are the two sides of a stick sent to summon to an initia-

tion ceremony. The longer notches at the top of the right-hand edge of 8 represent the old men to whom the stick is sent, those lower down are the women, and the edge on the

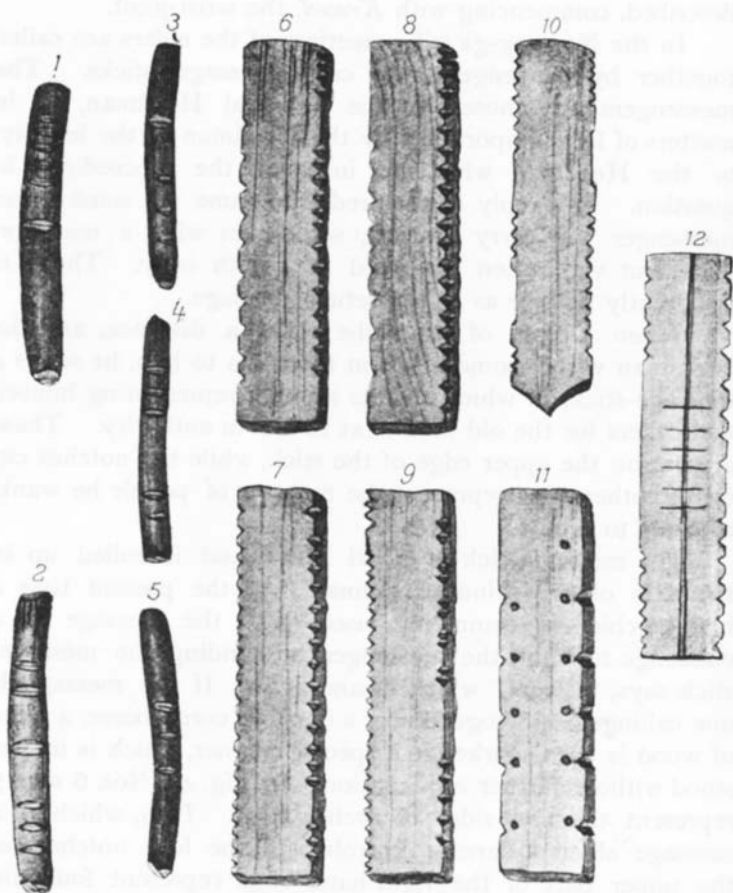


FIG. 44.—MESSAGE-STICKS OF THE TONGARANKA, NARRANG-GA, MUNDAIN-BURA, AND YAKUNBURA TRIBES. $\times \frac{2}{3}$.

other side being notched indicates that the men are to come. On No. 9 the three upper notches represent the sender of the message and two other old men. The notches all down the edge represent all the men of that moiety of the tribe. The five notches at the bottom of the right-hand

edge are the boys to be initiated, and the five pairs of notches above represent couples of men to look after the boys during the ceremony.

It is not lawful for women to see this stick, which would be sent rolled up with a corroboree stick in some covering.

Two of the three old men referred to on No. 9 are two principal men who have already been instructed by the sender of the message, and whose duty it is to see that everything in their department is done correctly. These two old men are next in authority to the Headman and sit with him in consultation. It seems from my information that these two old men are analogous to the man in the Wurunjerri tribe who stood by *Billi-billeri* and "gave his words to other people," as before mentioned.

The five boys may be of any division of the tribe. One of the men in each couple is the father's brother of the boy, and the other man's duty is to hold his hands over the boy's eyes during a certain part of the initiation ceremonies.

The plan on which these sticks are marked seems to be this. Assuming that the Headman of one part of the tribe wishes to send a message to the Headman of the other part, he cuts a notch on one end of the upper side for himself, with one or more notches close to it, according to the number of old men with him. At the other end he cuts a notch for the recipient of the message, and a number of notches for the people he wishes to be sent to him. If there is not enough room he cuts their notches on the under side.¹ It seems from this that the marks themselves, for instance, on the corroboree and initiation sticks, might from constant use by the same person, or a succession of persons using the same method, and for substantially the same objects, come to have a certain meaning. This might then become a first step to a rude style of communicating thought by marks, unaccompanied by verbal explanation. I was told of a case in which a message-stick was carried by my correspondent, Mr. Sutton, for one of the Narrang-ga, which was merely a flat piece of wood with one notch at one end and two notches close together at the other. He

¹ T. M. Sutton.

delivered it without saying more than, "This is from so-and-so," not having received any message with it. The recipient, however, knew that the sender had been separated from his wife, and he understood the stick to mean that the two had been reconciled, and were together again, and this was the correct reading of the marks on the stick. This supports the view which I have suggested.

In the Narrinyeri tribe a messenger is called *Brigge*. When on a mission, he carries some part of his totem as an emblem. For instance, a messenger of the Tanganarin carried a pelican's feather, one of the Rangulinyeri a dingo's tail, one of the Karowalli a snake's skin. The messenger was safe from harm by reason of his office, and he was chosen to carry the message by the council of old men. The messenger delivered his message to the Headman of the clan to which he was sent, who sometimes escorted him part of the way back.¹ He also carried a message-stick, of which No. 2, Fig. 43, is an example.

The message-stick was in the most rudimentary state in the Kurnai tribe. If, for instance, a man desired to send a message to men of another division of his clan, or of another clan, asking them to meet him at a certain time and place, he would probably do so in the following manner. I assume, as an illustration, that the meeting is to be at a locality indicated by name, that it will take place after "two moons," and that such and such persons are to be there. The sender in giving his message to his *Baiara*, or messenger, would, if he used anything to aid his memory, break off a number of short pieces of stick, equal in number to the people he asks to meet him, one for each person, or the people of a certain place. By delivering them one by one, his messenger checks the accuracy of his memory as to the verbal message given him. The number of stages to be travelled are fixed by telling them off on the fingers of one or of both hands. If they were insufficient, the count would be again over the same fingers, or recourse would be had to the toes.

If the message was sent by the Headman of the locality,

¹ F. W. Taplin.

or of the clan, relating, for instance, to the *Jeraeil* ceremonies, the messenger would also carry with him as his credentials a bull-roarer, which he would deliver with his message in secret.

It was not infrequently the case that a Headman, to authenticate his messenger, gave him some weapon, for instance a club, known to the recipient of the message.

When the last great tribal ceremonial combat took place, the parties to it had been summoned to meet at a certain place, by a messenger who carried a jag-spear, on which was hung a man's kilt (*Bridda-bridida*) as the emblem of his mission.

A friendly messenger sent from one clan to another was also called *Bidda*. In 1850, that is, about eight years after the first settlement of Gippsland, such a messenger came from the Dairgo clan to those nearer the sea, and in delivering his message he spoke for a considerable time as to the relations between his people and the Ovens River tribe.

I am not aware what emblem he carried, but as in the case of the message calling together the tribes which I have mentioned, it might probably be a man's *Bridda-bridida* hung from the point of a spear.

No one would harm such messengers on such an occasion.

In the Chepara tribe the messenger, if sent by the principal Headman, carried with him a message stick called *Kabugabul-bajeru*, the markings on which are always the same, having been handed down from past times, and are known to the Headmen. It signifies that the recipient must start at once for the appointed place. The stick tells this of itself, but the actual message is by word of mouth.

Women and children are not permitted to see this stick.

The messenger delivers the message and the message-stick to the Headman of the clan to which he is sent, and which is nearest to his own. This Headman then sends it on by his own messenger to the next, and so on till it has been taken to all the clans. The message-stick is returned to the original sender. In cases of unusual importance, the original messenger has been known to carry the message-stick and message to all the clans of the tribe.

This message-stick was sent when all the tribe was to be collected for great meetings, ceremonial fights, or the *Bora* ceremonies.

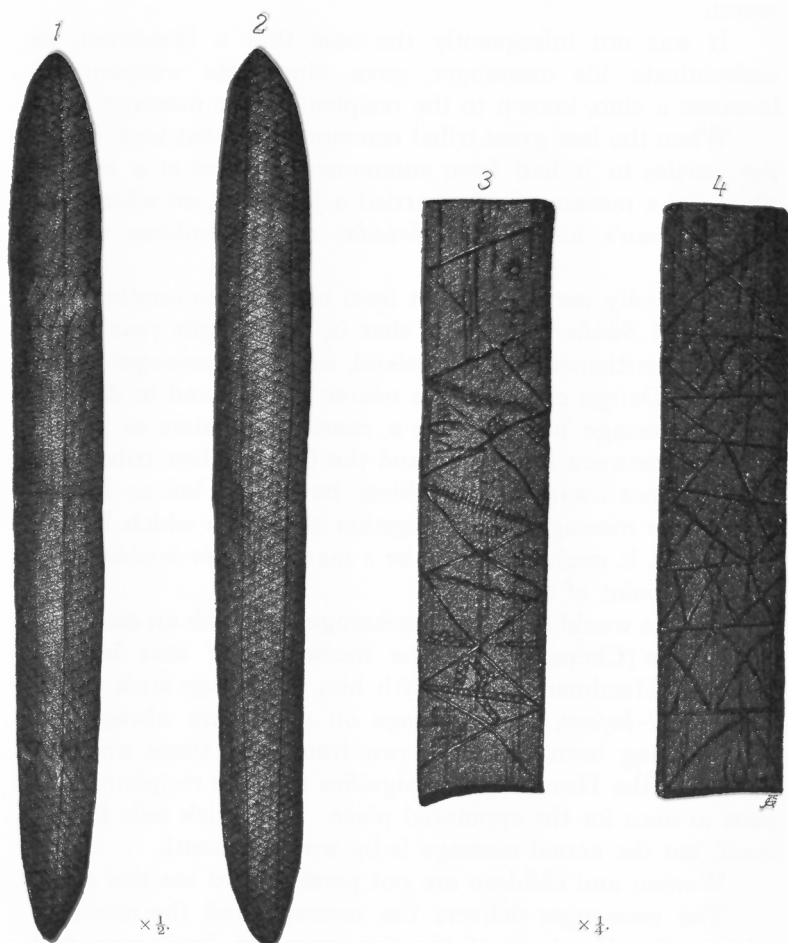


FIG. 45.—MESSAGE-STICK OF THE WAKELBURA TRIBE, AND KABUGABUL-BAJERU OF CHEPARA TRIBE.

The messenger was painted in a particular manner, was decked with feathers, and carried, when calling a *Bora*, in addition to the *Kabugabul-bajeru*, a bull-roarer (*Bribbun*), and a spear, to the point of which is attached a bag containing

quartz crystals, which could be only shown to the several Headmen.

This bull-roarer is kept by the principal Headman, and is believed to have special power. If seen by a woman, she is killed; if a man were to show it to her, both would be killed. The same penalty attaches to the revealing of the *Kabugabul-bajeru*.¹

The message-stick No. 12 in Fig. 44 is from the Yakunbura tribe of the Dawson River, Queensland. One end is coloured blue, the other red; the notches are to remind the messenger of the various parts of his message, and the lines marked across the longitudinal one are the days on which he has travelled. The persons to whom the stick is sent know from them the number of days it will take them to travel to the place from which the messenger has come.

A message-stick from the Mundainbura tribe of the Durham Downs in Queensland is shown on Fig. 44, No. 11. The notches shown on the right-hand edge represent a number of men of the Kurgilla sub-class. The two rows of dots represent men respectively of the Kunbe and Wungu sub-classes. The notches on the left-hand edge represent men of the Kuburu sub-class. The message with it was to invite these people to a corroboree.²

I sent a sketch of the stick to a valued correspondent, Mr. R. Christison of Lammermoor Station, with a request that he would ascertain what the men of the Dalebura tribe, living with him, could make of it. The Dalebura tribe has the same sub-classes as the Mundainbura tribe. In reply he informed me that his blacks made out the stick to mean, that the right-hand notches represent the Karagilla sub-class; the left-hand the Kuburu sub-class, and the dots represent a wish to meet.

This statement shows that the notches in the right and left-hand edges have a definite meaning as the Kurgilla and Kuburu sub-classes respectively. In the Kuinmurbura tribe, meetings for initiation ceremonies are called by means of message-sticks.

¹ J. Gibson.

² W. Logan.

One sent by the blacks to the westward was from the Bau totem (black eagle-hawk) to the Merkein totem (laughing jackass) of the Kuinmurbura tribe. It was a piece of rosewood about five inches by one and a half inch, and one inch thick.¹

The evidence shows that the message-sticks are merely a kind of tally, to keep record of the various heads of the message, and that the markings have no special meaning as conventional signs conveying some meaning. The instances which I have noted in the Narrang-ga and Mundainbura tribes merely show how such markings might, under favourable conditions, become the first steps to a system of conveying a message otherwise than verbally. What we find here may perhaps be considered as early stages, the ultimate result of which might be a system of writing, in which symbols would bear some resemblance to the original notches on these message-sticks.

TRIBAL EXPEDITIONS

All the tribes about Lake Eyre, and indeed far beyond it, use as a narcotic the dried leaves and twigs of the Pitcheri bush.²

The Dieri, at the time when I was in their country, sent a party of able-bodied men annually to the Pitcheri country, on the Herbert River in Northern Queensland, a distance of some two hundred and fifty miles from their boundaries. This party had to pass through the country of several hostile tribes, and if necessary to fight their way. On arriving at the Pitcheri country, the leaves and small twigs of this bush were picked off. Small holes, two feet deep, were dug in the sand and heated with live coals. When the holes were sufficiently heated they were cleaned out, the Pitcheri placed in them, covered up with hot sand, and then baked. When the sap had been evaporated, the Pitcheri was taken out and packed in netted bags or small wallaby skins; each man on the return of the party carrying a load of about seventy pounds.

Great preparations are made by the Dieri for the return

¹ W. H. Flowers.

² *Duboisia Hopwoodii*.

of the party. New huts are made, seeds of the season are stored up for fathers, brothers, husbands, and friends.

When such a party returned, its members were full of strange stories of battles they had fought, of tribes they had seen, men having toes behind their feet as well as in front, and all kinds of wild and extravagant reports.

The Pitcheri, though brought from so great a distance and obtained under such difficulties, is all gone after a few months, being bartered away to more southern tribes.¹

Mr. Gason informed me that when the Dieri expedition returned, he used to obtain as much as six bags, weighing each three pounds, for one shirt. As soon as the Pitcheri became scarce, the leading men would come to him, bringing all kinds of weapons as presents for a small quantity, begging him to give them "*pitcheri waka yinkeami*," that is, "give one little (chew of) Pitcheri."

I found the use of Pitcheri very common among the Yantruwunta. Frequently a quid of it was offered to me fresh from the mouth of a friendly blackfellow, and in an unchewed state I obtained it in small bags made of grass twine and human hair. The Yantruwunta also sent out a similar party for Pitcheri, and they told me that they travelled about ten days' journey for it, pointing to the north-west as the direction. This would give a distance of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred miles, and roughly agrees with the position of what is called the Pitcheri country. The Yantruwunta mixed the Pitcheri, before use, with the dried leaves of a bush called by them *Wirha*, which grows plentifully on the sandhills in their country, and which they dry in hot ashes for use. I found the use of Pitcheri to extend to the tribes of the Barrier Ranges, thus indicating an extended system of barter.

In July or August in each year the Dieri sent out an expedition southwards to procure red ochre. This was always regarded as being a perilous journey, with many dangers and privations. It seems to have been one of the most important duties of the Blanch-water division of the tribe to see to this matter. Some seventy to eighty of

¹ S. Gason.

the picked fighting-men of the tribe went on this mission, under some great leader. Each man was painted with three stripes of red ochre, with three stripes of micaceous iron-ore, immediately below them, across the abdomen. Two similar lines were drawn across the arms. Each man had all the hair of his beard and moustache plucked out, and the hair of his head cut short before he started.

They were well armed, and, if necessary, fought their

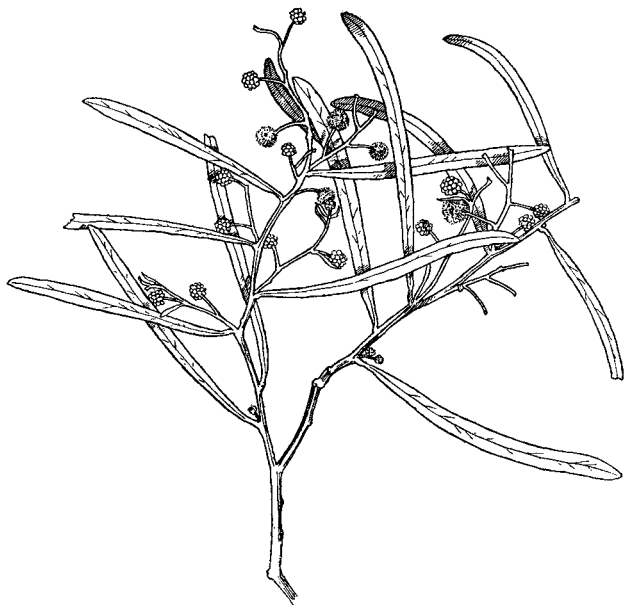


FIG. 46.—WIRHA. *ACACIA SALICINA*.

way against all opposition. The distance to be travelled depended upon where the party started from, and might be as much as three hundred miles. When in hostile country a watch was kept each night, and they had to procure food while travelling. The red ochre, when dug from some aboriginal mine, for instance near Beltana, was kneaded into large cakes, weighing when dry from seventy to eighty pounds. The red ochre is used for paint, for magical charms and such purposes, and also for barter with other tribes for spears, shields, and other weapons.

The Yantruwunta gave me a similar account of their annual expedition to fetch *Pocato* (red ochre), and also slabs of sandstone, on which they grind seeds of various plants and grasses for food. The locality to which they went for these things must, from the description given me, have been far down on the western side of the Flinders Range, and the distance over three hundred miles. They told me that such a party might not stop two nights at any one place in the journey; but had to fight its way there and back, and hunt for food as they went along. The flagstones used for grinding seeds were obtained not far from the red ochre mine. Each man carried back either a slab of stone or lump of red ochre on his head.

That these parties had to often fight their way to the mines of red ochre and freestone slabs is not surprising, when one remembers that these places were the property of the tribes in whose country they were situated. These expeditions were a trespass on them, and interfered with the barter which the owners of the mines no doubt carried on with other tribes. The case of the stone quarry before mentioned, in the Wurunjerri country, throws a sidelight on these matters.

There is a curious custom among the Dieri which may find its place here. It is called *Yutchin*. When a black-fellow is going a distance from home, either to another of the Dieri hordes, or its lesser divisions, or to a neighbouring tribe, some one at his camp becomes his *Yutchin*. This is done by tying a string made of human hair or native flax round his neck, to remind him of his promise to bring back presents.

It is then his duty to bring back with him articles for his *Yutchin*, who while he is away also collects presents for him. Under no circumstances is such a pledge broken, for if a person failed in it he would have all the men in the camp at him, and he would be reproached for being an untrustworthy man. Mr. Gason was frequently the *Yutchin* of some Dieri man, giving him old wearing apparel, and receiving from him in return carved weapons and ornamental articles. This practice is used for bartering. For instance,

if a man saw a carved boomerang which he desired to have, he would say to the owner, "I will give you such and such things for it, if you will be my *Yutchin*." If this is agreed to, and the proposer after having been away at some outside place brings back the things agreed upon, the exchange is made.

When the Dieri see a man or a woman with a string round his or her neck, they say, "Who are you *Yutchin* for?"

A son may be a *Yutchin* for his father; for instance, the latter may promise to make some boomerangs for his sons while they are out hunting for him. Whatever they catch, no matter how much it is, they hand it to him on their return; and the women flock to see what kind of *Yutchin* the boys have been. The boomerangs are of course made and handed over at once. Little boys will coax their father to make boomerangs for them by promising to be his *Yutchin*.¹

When at Cooper's Creek I observed that the blacks used shields made of some wood not known to me in that part of Australia. Subsequently, when I was able to obtain information from them, I learned the following particulars. The Yantruwunta obtained these shields from their neighbours higher up Cooper's Creek, who got them from tribes farther to the north-east. The Yantruwunta on their part exchanged weapons made by them, and stone slabs for grinding seeds which they brought from the south. I also saw among these tribes, though rarely, a portion of a large univalve shell, worn suspended by a string from the neck, which I was told came from the north. Inquiries made later from the Dieri show that they bartered with the Mardala, or hill tribes, to the south of them, for skins.

This information indicates an extensive system of inter-tribal communication and barter, which was apparently carried on by men who were the recognised means of communication. But there are also established trade centres at which the tribes meet on certain occasions for a regulated barter. One of these old trade centres is Kopperamana on the Cooper, where the surrounding tribes met periodically

¹ S. Gason.

to confer and barter their respective manufactures. It may be noted here, that the name Kopperamana is a mutilation of the true name *Kappara-mara*, from *Kappara* meaning "hand," and *Mara* meaning "root." But *Mara* also means "hair" of the head, which is connected with the head as the fingers are with the hand. The meaning of the name really is, that as the fingers all come together in the "root" of the hand, so do the native tribes come together at Kopperamana to confer together, and especially to exchange their respective articles of barter. Kopperamana is, therefore, one of the trade centres for the tribes allied to the Dieri.

There are four different occasions on which the barter is carried on. One, which I have already described, is when a blood-feud is settled by barter of goods, so that the feud may be healed, bloodshed be avoided, and people live in peace.¹

Here we see a procedure which, under favourable conditions, might have developed into such a custom as that of the *Wergeld* of the Teutonic tribes. Another occasion of barter is when there is an assembly for the great *Wilyaru* ceremony.

At the termination of this ceremony, the young man who has been made *Wilyaru-mara*² is sent out to call the people together, from far and near, to the market, as it may be called, which is held in his honour. After some months he returns to the place where he was made *Wilyaru*, accompanied by a number of men from other places laden with articles for barter. Another lot of men from other places, who are all *Wilyaru*, have joined the men belonging to the locality, and await at the bartering place the arrival of the *Wilyaru* and his companions. On some evening after his arrival, soon after nightfall, the sound of the *Yuntha* (bull-roarer) is heard, and fire signals, at first several miles distant, are seen approaching. To this they reply by throwing burning pieces of wood up in the air, and sounding the *Yuntha*. Then, as the approaching party comes nearer, the shouts at each renewal of the fire signal can be heard, until at length visitors enter upon the prepared ground, their leader

¹ O. Siebert.

² *Mara* is "new."

being preceded by the *Wilyaru-mara*, and both parties join in a ceremonial dance, to the sound of the bull-roarer.

Suddenly the leader jumps on the back of the *Wilyaru-mara*, who then dances in the midst of the circle of men, with quivering limbs. Then they change places, and the leader dances, carrying the *Wilyaru*.

This being over, the two parties separate, and sitting down opposite each other, the bartering commences in the same manner as in the Yutyuto ceremonies.

The Dieri exchange string-tassels, which are worn by the men for decency, netted bags, red ochre, etc. Tribes from the east bring boomerangs (*Kirha*), shields (*Pirha-mara*),¹ and other articles made of wood. Those who come from the north bring Pitcheri and feathers. Those who come from the south and west bring stone slabs. These particulars indicate the nature of the inter-tribal trade, and the radius within which it is carried on, taking Kopperamana as the centre. It may certainly be held that reciprocal trade centres exist in the tribal countries, from which those who attend the meetings at Kopperamana come.²

There is another ceremony connected with bartering called *Kani-nura*. It arises when a mother, being out seeking for food, has with her her son, of about five years of age, and sees a *Kani*.³

She kills the *Kani* and roasts it on the fire, but carefully keeps the tail, and, on returning to the camp, gives it to her husband. He gives it to a *Neyi* of his son, who is an aged man,⁴ and says to him, "Your *Ngatata* has seen a *Kani*; here is the tail. I think it best to burn it at once." He replies, "Do not do that, he must go to my country." That place may be at a great distance, even as far as Salt Creek, Oudnadatta, or Kunangara. The *Neyi* takes the boy—who is now called *Kani-nura*, from the cord which the *Neyi* ties round him—and sends him by another *Neyi* to his country, where his kindred look after the boy. After a time these return, bringing with them articles for barter,

¹ *Pirha* is a wooden bowl, and *mara* is the hand.

² O. Siebert.

³ *Kani* is a lizard.

⁴ *Neyi* is elder brother, *Ngatata*, younger brother. The context shows that these are "tribal" and not "own" relationships.

carrying them secretly, so that no one may see what they are. The people who have come with the boy, and the people of his own place, seat themselves opposite to each other; the old *Neyi* of the boy who had called the people together, by means of the *Kani-nura*, being so placed that he just faces the boy, who is seated on his father's lap. The *Neyi* holds the *Kani-nura* cord against the breast of the boy, and says, "Why did you find the *Kani*? You must not think that you have any longer any *Neyi* or *Kaka* (elder sister) in my country, any more than there will be a *Kani-nura* when the fire has burned it." Then he breaks the cord and throws the pieces into the fire. The people who have come together for the ceremony then exchange their things, and lastly the *Neyi* of the boy, who sent him to his country, and the *Neyi* who took care of him, exchange theirs.

These ceremonies take place whenever a little boy finds a *Kani*, or one of the small lizards called *Tiubba-tiubba* and *Kadiwaru*.¹

Bartering was also practised by the Wiimbaio, with the blacks from higher up the Darling River, who occasionally brought down wood of the mulga tree for spear points, slabs of stone, and hard and heavy pestles of granite for pounding and grinding seeds and tough tubers. These they exchanged for nets, twine, or fish-hooks.²

When the people who attended the great tribal meetings of the Wotjobaluk were about to depart to their homes there was an assembly at the *Jun*, or men's council-place, where they exchanged the articles which they had brought for the purpose. These articles were such as the following: Sets of spears, respectively called *Guiyum-ba-jarram*, or jag spear, and reed spears; opossum skin rugs, called *Jirak-willi* (opossum skin); men's kilts, called *Burring-jun*, made of the skin of the kangaroo-rat (*Goiyi*), or padi-melon (*Jallagur*); armlets worn round the upper arm, called *Murrumdat-yuk*; wooden bowls called *Mitchigan*; in fact, all the implements, utensils, arms, and ornaments used by these people. It was to such a meeting that the Jajaurung man,

¹ O. Siebert.

² J. Bulmer.

Tenamet-javolich, before mentioned, carried stone from the quarry at Charlotte Plains to be made into axe-heads. The same was the case with the meetings of the Jupagalk tribe.

The same practice of barter occurred when there were great tribal meetings in the Kulin nation. Such a meeting was held about the year 1840 at the Merri Creek near Melbourne, at which people came from the Lower Goulburn River, from its upper waters, and even from as far as the Buffalo River. Not only was barter carried on, but, as Berak said, people made presents to others from distant parts "to make friends."¹

Buckley mentions that a messenger (*bihar*) came from the Wudthaurung to propose that the latter should exchange eels for roots. The place of meeting was about fourteen days' distance to travel. The exchange was made by two men of each party delivering the eels and roots on long sheets of bark, carrying them on their heads from one party to the other until the bargain was concluded. When the tribes separated an agreement was made to meet again for barter.

The Yuin ceremonies of initiation were attended by people from a district included by Shoalhaven River, Braidwood, the southern part of Manero, and Twofold Bay. At the termination of these ceremonies, when the novices had gone away into the bush for their time of probation, and when the people were about to separate, there was held a kind of market, at which those articles which they had brought with them for exchange were bartered. It was held at some clear place near the camp, and a man would say, "I have brought such and such things," and some other man would bargain for them. A complete set of articles is one *Ngulia* or belt of opossum-fur string, four *Burrair* or men's kilts, one *Gumbrum* or bone nose-peg, and a complete set of corroboree ornaments. It was the rule that a complete set went together. Weapons might be given in exchange, and a complete set of these is "two hands," that is ten, fighting boomerangs (*Warangun*),

¹ Morgan, *op. cit.* p. 49.

being the straight-going ones; the same number of grass-tree spears (*Gumma*); one of each kind of shield, namely the *Bemata*, used for stopping spears, and the *Millidu*, used for club fighting; one club (*Gujerung* or *Bundi*), and one spear-thrower (*Meara*).

The women also engaged in this trade, exchanging opossum rugs, baskets, bags, digging-sticks (*Tuali*), etc.

Not only were these things bartered, but presents were



FIG. 47.—KURNAI WOMAN WITH BASKETS.

made to friends and to the Headmen by the other men. The women also gave things to the wives of the Headmen. A Headman who was held in great esteem might have as many things given to him as he could well carry away.

Not only were articles which the people made themselves bartered, but also things which had some special value, and had perhaps been brought from some distant place. Such an instance I heard of at one of these meetings many years ago. An ancient shield had been brought originally from the upper waters of the Murrumbidgee River, and was greatly valued because, as my informant

said, it had "won many fights." Yet it was exchanged, and carried away on its farther travels.

There is a natural tendency for certain occupations to become hereditary. The office of medicine-man, for instance, and that of song-maker have been already mentioned, as well as that of Headman, as being in some cases hereditary. One instance remains, which is, so far, the only one which has come to my knowledge. In the Herbert River tribes the various trades, if one may use that term, are hereditary, so that there are hereditary tree-climbers, canoe, shield, spear, and boomerang makers. Fishermen, rain-makers or medicine-men, hunters, messengers or heralds. Among the women are yam-hunters, hut-makers, basket-makers, etc. The tribal rain-maker is also an hereditary shield-maker.¹

SMOKE SIGNALS AND OTHERS

When the Dieri expected visitors who might not know the position of their camp, they informed them of it by smoke signals. These were also made use of to attract the attention of distant parties with whom the smoke-makers desired to communicate. When out in the Yandairunga country in the year 1859, to the south-west of Lake Eyre, I saw almost daily as I travelled columns of smoke rising from the flat-topped hills of the Desert sandstone. These signals were evidently to call the attention of other parties of Yandairunga to the strangers travelling in their country, but I never succeeded in getting into touch with the signalling parties.

The Willuri and Hilleri tribes between Eucla and Port Lincoln make signals by smoke and marks in the sand to show friends the direction taken by the tribe, such as very short overlapping steps.²

If one party of the Ngarigo were in search of another, and knew that they were in some particular locality, they would go up on to a hill and fill a sheet of bark, rolled up into a pipe, with dry grass. By setting fire to this a column of smoke would be caused to ascend into the air,

¹ J. Gaggin.

² F. Gaskell.

and if the other blacks saw it they would respond in the same way.

In the old times, when two parties of Kamilaroi were, say, twenty miles apart, and one of them was anxious to know if the other was on friendly terms with the white men, they would select a hollow tree, with two or three pipes to it, at some height from the ground. They then kindled a fire within it so that the smoke issued from the pipey arms. The number of pipes would be arranged beforehand: for instance, smoke issuing from two pipes might mean peace, and three war. If the tree had too many holes, two or more would be plugged up.¹

The Yuin also used the same kind of smoke signals. To communicate with friends at a distance a sheet of bark would be rolled up and stuffed full of bark and leaves. Being then set fire to at the bottom and held straight up, a column of smoke ascended into the air. They preferred this to a hollow tree, but in either case the signal would have to be arranged for beforehand, so as to be understood. In order to inform friends who may be following which way one has gone, a stick or spear in the old times would be stuck in the ground near to the camp fire, pointing in the direction; or if the man was not returning a stick would be stuck in the ashes of the fire, and those following would know by their amount of heat how long the party had been gone.

The manner in which the Gringai communicated their movements to following friends will be seen from the following anecdote. My correspondent, the late Dr. M'Kinlay, wished to see certain blacks, but found their camp deserted. His black boy said he would see where they had gone, and going to the camp showed him a spear stuck in the ashes of the fire, with a corn cob tied to the point. The spear was leaning in a certain direction. He explained this by saying that they were gone to a place in the direction in which the spear pointed to pick corn, but would be back shortly. This proved to be the case.

When one branch of the Bigambul tribe is approaching

¹ C. Naseby.

the country of another branch, a hollow tree is set on fire, so that the smoke is seen at a distance.¹

The Kaiabara used smoke signals to call the tribe together. When leaving camp, they indicated to others where they were gone to by placing a stick in the ground pointing in the direction.²

When one or more of the Narrang-ga messengers are



FIG. 48.—AN ORAL PLACED AS A GUIDE TO A FOLLOWING PARTY.
KURNAI TRIBE.

approaching a place where they know others are encamped, they make a smoke, but there is nothing more in this than to announce their approach.³

The Kurnai indicate the direction in which they have gone by either planting a stick in the ground leaning in a certain direction and with some bark tied on the end, or by bending a small sapling in it, and tying the leafy branches of its head up in a ball, either by themselves or with some-

¹ J. Lalor.

² Jocelyn Brooke.

³ T. M. Sutton.

thing tied to them to attract attention. This signal is called *Obal*.

GESTURE LANGUAGE

The use of gestures accompanying, supplementing, or replacing speech is apparently to some extent inherent in the human race. Children make use naturally, or as some might prefer to say, instinctively, of certain signs. Deaf mutes necessarily use them to communicate their needs and wishes, and some simple signs are so universally used that the term "natural gestures" seems not inapplicable to them.

It has long been known that gesture language is much used among the North American Indians, and some remarkable statements have been made as to the reasons for its use. Burton attributed it to the paucity of language, which compelled the use of supplementary signs. It was even said that certain tribes could not communicate freely unless when daylight permitted the use of gestures. This statement has been completely disposed of by researches of American anthropologists, especially those of Col. Garrick Mallery, to whose exhaustive treatise upon this subject the reader is referred.

It cannot be said that the use of signs by the Australian aborigines is in any way due to paucity of language, theirs being fully competent to provide for every mental or material necessity of their life. Those who have had the opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with these savages in their social life will agree with me in this statement, and no one can feel the slightest doubt who has heard one of their orators addressing an assembly of the men, and with a flow of persuasive eloquence moulding opinion to his will.

It is somewhat remarkable, and at the same time difficult to explain, that the use of gesture language varies so much in different tribes. Some have a very extensive code of signs, which admit of being so used as to almost amount to a medium of general communication. Other tribes have no more than those gestures

which may be considered as the general property of mankind.

The occurrence or absence of gestures as an aid or substitute for speech does not, as far as I can ascertain, depend on social status, or the locality in which a tribe lives. Yet, so far as I can venture to form an opinion from my own observations, and from the statements made to me by correspondents, the use of sign language is more common in Central and North-eastern Australia than in the South-eastern quarter of the Continent.

The reason for this may perhaps be found in the vast extents of open country, plains, sandhills, and stony tracts which occur in the interior of Australia, as, for instance, in the Lake Eyre basin.

A stranger is seen there from afar off, and can be interrogated at a safe distance by gesture language as to who he is, where he comes from, and his intentions. When I first saw some of the Cooper's Creek blacks, I was struck by their use of gestures, at a safe distance, and which I took to be either a defiance or a command to depart. In reality they were the sign for peace and the sign for interrogation as to our destination, or as to our reason for being there. Afterwards, when I became better acquainted with them, I came to see that these gestures were part of a complete system of hand signs, by which a person might be interrogated, informed, welcomed, or warned. In the coastal regions or in the forest-clad mountain ranges which lie alongside the Great Dividing Range, separating the coast lands from the interior, such would not be the case, and gesture language could not be made use of at a distance excepting in rare cases.

I venture this supposition, but without laying much stress upon it.

The different degree in which gesture language is made use of may be best seen by taking a few illustrations from tribes within my knowledge.

The Dieri have a very full code of signs which suffice for ordinary needs of communication. A widow is not permitted to speak until the whole of the white clay which

forms her "mourning" has come off without assistance. During this time (perhaps for months) she communicates by gestures alone.¹

As an instance of the value of such a means of communication between tribes speaking different languages, I give the following.

In 1853 seventeen of the Wirangu tribe were driven in from their country to the west of Lake Torrens by a water famine. They came across, and made for Elder's Range in hope of getting water. Here they fell in with the Arkaba blacks, who received them very kindly and hospitably for about a fortnight, when the appearance of rain induced the visitors to take their departure homewards. They did not understand a word of each other's language, and it was merely by gestures that they managed to communicate with each other. They were in every respect very different to the Parnkalla, in language, colour, and general appearance. They were not of a very dark shade, more of a dark dirty red, and had rather broad features but a pleasant expression of countenance.²

In contrast to the Dieri, the Kurnai may be instanced as a tribe without any "gesture language," although I have seen them use certain signs in lieu of words, when they were, from one reason or another, prevented from using, or were reluctant to use the words themselves. Thus the messenger who conveyed the news of the death of some individual to his kindred or friends, either spoke of the deceased in a roundabout manner, as the "father," "brother," "son," as the case might be, of "that person" (pointing to him), or what was perhaps more common, owing to the objection to refer to the dead, the messenger would say, naming the relationship, for instance, "the father of that one is ——", then concluding the sentence by pointing with the forefinger to the ground or to the sky. Thus intimating that he was buried, or that he had gone up to the *Leen wruk* or "good land."

Intermediately between these two extremes are other tribes, with a more or less extensive or limited gesture

¹ O. Siebert.

² Dr. M'Kinlay.

language, such as I have quoted in the following lists.

The systematic use of gestures by the Australian aborigines, in lieu of words, or in connection with speech, seems to have been almost overlooked until lately by writers on the native tribes of Australia. It was observed that they used certain signs, such as shaking or nodding the head to signify dissent or assent. Explorers have occasionally mentioned that the blackfellows they met with used gestures to them, as, for instance, Sir Thomas Mitchell, when travelling on the Thompson River. But the idea did not arise that in such cases these signs and gestures were not merely the natural aids to speech, but, in fact, formed part of a recognised and well-understood system of artificial language, by which these savages endeavoured to communicate with the white strangers passing through their country, just as they would have endeavoured to communicate with strangers of their own colour.

Speaking of the Port Stephens aborigines, Mr. R. Dawson¹ describes a meeting with some strange blacks. He told those who were with him "to make the sign of peace to them, which they did by waving the right hand over the head and then pointing to the ground. No return was made to this, and on repeating the sign an answer was returned in a loud and as it seemed menacing tone. The natives of each party harangued each other in turns, and then the strange blacks placed their spears against a tree and gave an invitation to join them." This account is very characteristic of similar meetings which I observed when in the Cooper's Creek country.

The difficulties which arise in investigating the use of gesture language are very great. The ordinary inquirer needs to be almost specially trained to the work in order to prevent his falling into errors in interpreting or describing the signs made. There is, moreover, always the danger that a blackfellow may misunderstand the meaning of the inquiry, and instead of giving such signs as are recognised in his tribe, or of saying that there were none at all, will

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 128.

endeavour to give such a translation in signs as seems to him best to express the reply to the question put to him.

I have not been able to do more than superficially touch upon this subject. I have recorded the few data which I have been able to obtain, and it is to be hoped that those who are in a position to do so will more fully investigate and record at least one complete system. Central Australia seems to be best suited for this, where the aborigines have apparently more fully developed the use of gestures than in other parts of Australia. Here follow some of the signs :—

All.—Hold out the clenched hands and open and shut them several times (Wurunjerri).

All gone.—Extend both hand and arms, as if in the act of swimming, then point in the direction in which they have gone (Dieri). Hold out both hands with widely extended fingers, and the palms downward, in the direction in which they have gone (Aldolingo).¹

All right.—Hold the hand out, palm upwards, and describe several horizontal circles with it (Aldolingo).¹ Nod the head twice (Kuriwalu).²

Anger.—Pout the lips out (Dieri).³

Above.—The head is bent back and the eyes look upwards, the right hand being held higher than the head and above it (Dieri).⁴

Attention.—Hold up the open hand, palm outwards, and move it once or twice up and down (Wurunjerri). Wave the open hand, palm upwards, several times towards the body (Kuriwalu).²

Bad (meaning “decayed”).—Avert the face and screw up the mouth and nose as if in disgust (Dieri).⁴ Shake the head and blow through the nostrils (Eucla).⁵

Before.—Point forwards and a little downwards with the right hand and forefinger (Aldolingo).¹ Point with the hand in front downwards (Dieri)⁴; also, the hand being held level with the waist, move it to the front (Dieri).⁴

NOTE.—When no correspondent is given, the information is my own.

¹ Rev. H. Kempe.

² J. H. Kirkham.

³ S. Gason.

⁴ Vogelsang.

⁵ H. Williams.

Right hand is brought from the left shoulder across the body in front (Kuriwalu).²

Behind.—Place the left hand, fingers slightly closed, and palm outwards, behind the hip (Wurunjerri). Point with the hand backwards (Dieri).⁴ Point with the hand extended behind the body (Aldolinga).¹ Waft the hand with the fingers open downwards and to the rear (Kuriwalu).²

Be quiet.—Close the hand loosely, the fingers being towards yourself, then make several motions with it downwards in front of the body (Dieri).⁴ Make several short movements with the right hand in front towards the ground (Wurunjerri). Make several short movements with the right hand in front towards the ground (Yantruwunta). Make a motion with the closed fist from the mouth downwards (Aldolinga).¹

Be quick.—Hold out the hand and arm stiffly, and rather high. Shake the hand several times as if flirting something off (Dieri).⁴ Make a number of circular movements from right to left in front of the body, with the open hand, palm downwards (Aldolinga).¹ Wave the hand several times towards the body (Kuriwalu).² Arms brought to the front horizontally, and then extended right back (Mundainbura).⁶

Big.—Extend both arms semicircularly from the shoulders outwards, the fingers slightly crooked and separated, and at the same height as the shoulders (Wurunjerri). The hand held horizontally to the ground the approximate size intended (Dieri).⁴ Strike with the clenched fist towards the ground; if for "very big" make a long stroke (Dieri).³ Shut both hands, excepting the forefingers, with which indicate size by holding them apart (Kuriwalu).² Spread out the arms as if describing something large (Eucla).⁵

Bring here.—Extend the hand palm upwards, fingers a little closed, as if to receive something. Then draw the hand towards yourself (Dieri).⁴

Bring together; Collect; Heap up.—Extend the arms with the palms of the hands towards each other, then draw them towards the body several times round (Wurunjerri).

¹ Rev. H. Kempe.

⁴ Vogelsang.

² J. H. Kirkham.

⁵ H. Williams.

³ S. Gason.

⁶ W. Logan.

Extend the arm towards the ground, and make two or three quick movements with the open hand towards the ground (Yantruwunta).

Camp.—Chop twice with the right hand, at an angle of 45° from right to left in front of yourself. Then place forefinger of the right hand between the tips of the first and second fingers of the left hand, simulating a ridge pole (Wurunjerri).

Camp, or sleep.—Recline the head upon the hand, as if sleeping (Dieri).⁴ Lay the head on the right hand and close the eyes (Mundainbura).⁶

Child.—Place both hands behind the back, as if carrying one (Dieri).⁴

Come here.—Beckon with the open hand towards yourself (Wurunjerri). Point to the person with the right hand, then point to the left (Aldolinga).¹ Motion as if throwing a stone, but bringing the hand afterwards towards the body (Eucla).⁵

Come on.—Extend the hand and arm straight out, then bend the arm towards yourself. The action repeated several times means “come quickly” (Dieri).³

Come here; Sit down.—Beckon towards yourself with right hand, palm upwards, fingers slightly bent, then make a motion or two with them towards the ground at the right (Wolgal).

Companions.—Hold up the fore and middle fingers of one hand, then lightly snap the fingers and thumb (Dieri).⁴

Cut.—Draw the forefinger of the one hand across the other hand (Dieri).⁴ There was a man in the Yantruwunta tribe whom I often saw, but never knew his name, excepting by a gesture which distinguished him, and which meant “broken arm.” It was made by striking the radius of the left arm with the right hand open and held vertically.

Danger.—Make a movement as of catching a fly close to the mouth, and then squeezing it (Dieri).³ Place the right hand in front of the body and then step back a pace or two (Kuriwalu).²

¹ Rev. H. Kempe.

² J. H. Kirkham.

³ S. Gason.

⁴ Vogelsang.

⁵ H. Williams.

⁶ W. Logan.

Dead; Death.—Make a mark along the ground by drawing the finger along (Dieri).⁴ Bring the hands together, then make a movement with them as if concealing something (Dieri).³ Stoop a little, and then pat the ground with the back of the hand (Yantruwunta).

Doctor; Medicine-man.—Draw the head in between the shoulders, then draw the forefinger down the nose; cross the arms over the breast, and stroke down each arm with the other, finally passing each arm over the stomach (Dieri).⁴

Distance; Far off.—If near, point a little way off; if far off, point to the horizon (Wurunjerri). Incline head backwards and stick out upper lip (Eucla).⁵ *Close at hand*, in the camp, point to ground. *Near*, point to horizon. *Far off*, point to direction at a high altitude (Wolgal).

Drink; Drinking.—Imitate lifting water to the mouth with the hand (Wurunjerri). Place the thumb and forefinger of the right hand together like a scoop, and carry the hand up to the mouth (Dieri).⁴ Throw the head back, and carry the hand up to the mouth (Kuriwalu).²

Eat.—Lift the hand to the mouth, as if conveying food (Dieri).⁴

Enemy (wild blackfellow).—First make the sign for man, then make that for distance (Wurunjerri). Right hand open, and palm downwards. Move it two or three times vertically in front of the body, then repeat the same at the right side (Kuriwalu).² Place the hand, palm outwards, in front of the face, then turn it several times from inwards to outwards (Aldolanga).¹

Emu.—Hold the hand out with the forefinger and little finger extended, the thumb and the other fingers closed (Dieri).⁴

Enough.—Hold out the hands as in the sign for “big,” then point to yourself and make the sign for “none” (Wurunjerri). Tap the stomach several times with the flat hand, then wave the hand with the finger spread outwards (Dieri).⁴ Tap the mouth with the open hand, then wave the hand (Kuriwalu).²

¹ Rev. H. Kempe.

⁴ Vogelsang.

² J. H. Kirkham.

³ S. Gason.

⁵ H. Williams.

Far away.—Snap the fingers in the direction indicated (Dieri).⁴ Stretch the hand out full length, and snap the fingers (Aldolinga).¹

Fight.—Hold the two hands as high as the head, as if grasping a weapon, then strike with them in all directions (Dieri).⁴

Feather head-dress.—Hold the hair of the head with one hand, and with the other imitate the action of sticking something into it (Dieri).⁴

Give me.—Hold out the hand at full length, palm up (Wurunjerri). Extend the hand, palm up, and then draw it back (Dieri).⁴ Right hand held out at full length, the fingers a little bent (Kuriwalu).² Hold out the hands, palm upwards (Eucla).⁵

Glad.—Pat the breasts with both hands several times (Wurunjerri).

Good.—Make a trembling or vibrating motion with both hands, palms inwards, in front of the face, which must have a pleased expression (Dieri).⁴ Move the right hand, palm upwards, up and down in front of the body, then point downwards (Aldolinga).¹

Go away; Go on.—Hand with back to face, moved sharply outwards, in a semicircle to full length of arm (Yantruwunta). The hand is thrown sharply from the breast, palm inwards (Kuriwalu).² Hold up the hand in front of the face, palm outwards, and make several quick movements outwards from yourself (Dieri).³ Point in the direction to go with the second finger of the right hand (Aldolinga).¹ Hold the hand near the face, palm outwards, as if holding something. Then act as if throwing it away (Dieri).⁴ Bring arm round to the front of the body, the palm of hand being to self. Then throw it out to person addressed (Mundainbura).⁶

Halt; Stop.—Make a sign with the outstretched right hand, palm downwards, towards the ground, repeat this several times rapidly (Dieri).⁴ Rapidly move the right hand from the breast, palm outwards, to the full length upwards,

¹ Rev. H. Kempe.

² J. H. Kirkham.

³ S. Gason.

⁴ Vogelsang.

⁵ H. Williams.

⁶ W. Logan.

then point to the ground (Aldolinga).¹ Make three waves towards the ground with the hand (Kuriwalu).² Throw hand towards the ground (Eucla).⁵ Stretch hand out in front, with palm outwards. Then suddenly jerk hand downwards (Mundainbura).⁶

Hear.—Point to the ear with the forefinger of the right hand (Wurunjerri). Make a number of small circles with the finger in front of the ear (Aldolinga).¹ Fanning with the hand about two inches from the ear means, "I cannot hear you. Say it again" (Dieri).³ Extend the hand over the head as high as possible; stoop and reach out as far as possible till the hand nearly reaches the ground; do this quickly, this means, "I hear you, I know what you mean." These signs are used when communicating from a distance (Dieri).³ Point to the ear (Eucla).⁵ Touch the ear (Ngarigo). Tap the ear, then raise the hand above the head (Mundainbura).⁶

Hungry.—Extend the arms both upwards, so as to show the stomach drawn in (Wurunjerri). Rub the open hand over the stomach (Yantruwunta). Tap the stomach with the finger and then extend the open hand (Dieri).⁴ Point to the stomach with bent fingers (Aldolinga).¹ Pat the stomach (Kuriwalu).² Draw up the abdomen, and look miserable (Eucla).⁵ Rub the pit of the stomach with the right hand (Wolgal). Pat the stomach with the hand (Mundainbura).⁶

I.—Point to the breast (Wurunjerri). Pass the forefinger down at a little distance from the forehead along the nose, or tap the breast lightly with the forefinger (Dieri).⁴ Point to yourself (Aldolinga).¹ Point to the breast (Kuriwalu).² Place hand upon the chest (Eucla).⁵ Tap the breast with the forefinger (Mundainbura).⁶

Kill.—Make several movements downwards with the fist, as of striking violently (Dieri).⁴ Strike short blows with one hand on the other (Dieri).³ Hold the right hand high over the head, with the palm downwards (Kuriwalu).²

Large.—Clench the fist and strike downwards. For *very large*, strike a longer blow with more force (Dieri).³

¹ Rev. H. Kempe.

² J. H. Kirkham.

³ S. Gason.

⁴ Vogelsang.

⁵ H. Williams.

⁶ W. Logan.

Man.—Indicate with both hands the outline of a beard. The size of the beard denotes the age—a great beard is a great age, *i.e.*, an old man (Wurunjerri). Indicate the beard with the right hand, as of passing the hand down it. For an old man, tap lightly several times on the top of the head (Dieri).⁴ Clutch the beard and shake it (Dieri).⁴ Close the right hand except the middle finger, then describe a small circle with it (Aldolinga).¹ Touch the beard (Eucla).⁵

Mother.—Take hold of the breast with one hand and shake it (Dieri).⁴

No; Not; None.—Shake the head (Wurunjerri). Shake the head several times, the hand being raised as high as the face, and held loosely pendent from the wrist, as if shaking something from the fingers (Dieri),⁴ also (Yantruwunta). Shake the head (Dieri).⁴ Hold the right hand palm outwards, then point upwards (Aldolinga).¹ Shake the head several times, then wave the hand from the breast, palm downwards (Kuriwalu).² Shake the head and raise the hand to the front (Mundainbura).⁶

Peace.—Hold up both hands at full length, open palms outwards above the head (Yantruwunta). The same, or hold one hand up, and shake the fingers as if making the sign for nothing (Dieri).⁴ Hand thrown forward, full length from the body, palm downwards, and head bent back (Kuriwalu).²

Salt water.—Point to the mouth, and touch the point of the tongue with the finger (Dieri).⁴ The same for the Yantruwunta. Rub the windpipe with thumb and forefinger (Wolgal).

Silence; Say no more.—Thumb of each hand turned inwards, then stoop and extend the hands full length. This also implies a threat of strangling, and is used, for instance, by the old men to the young men when they are misbehaving themselves (Dieri).⁴

Sit down.—Make the sign for halt. Stop and point to the ground (Wurunjerri). Extend the arm towards the

¹ Rev. H. Kempe.

² J. H. Kirkham.

⁴ Vogelsang.

⁵ H. Williams.

⁶ W. Logan.

ground, and make two or three quick movements with the open hand towards the ground (Yantruwunta).

Sleep.—Incline the head on the open hand towards the shoulder (Wurunjerri). Incline the head upon the palm of the hand near the shoulder (Dieri).⁴ Place left hand over the eyes, and incline the head on the left hand (Kuriwalu).² Drop the head to one side; or recline and close the eyes (Eucla).⁵ Recline the head on one hand (Wolgal). Lay the head on the right hand and close the eyes (Mundainbura).⁶

Supernatural Being (Bunjil).—Make exaggerated sign for old man, then make exaggerated sign for "big," then point to the sky (Wurunjerri). Similar gestures are made by the Murring.

Thirsty.—Make the sign for "to drink," then hold out the open hand (Dieri).⁴ Point to the stomach and then snap the fingers (Aldolinga).¹ Scratch the throat (Kuriwalu).²

To run.—Hold the arms bent at the elbows, with the hands clenched in front; then describe circles outwards, indicating the movements of legs running (Wurunjerri).

To see.—Touch the eye with the forefinger, and then point in the direction indicated (Wurunjerri). Describe a number of small circles with the finger from the eye in the direction indicated (Aldolinga).¹ Touch the eyes (Eucla).⁵ Touch the eye (Wolgal).

Where? What? What is it? etc..—Place right hand at left breast palm outwards, then move it up at an angle of 45° with the horizon, hold up for a moment, and let drop; when moving the hand, jerk up the chin (Wurunjerri). Hold the right hand opposite to and higher than the shoulder, gradually turning the hand so that at last the palm is upwards; or do this so that the movement of the hand upwards and forwards only brings it level with the face (Yantruwunta). Throw up the hand higher than the head, then let it fall palm upwards (Dieri).⁴

Where are you going? Who are you?—Hold the right hand about twelve or fifteen inches in front of the shoulder, palm to front and fingers expanded, wave it quickly

¹ Rev. H. Kempe.

² J. H. Kirkham.

⁴ Vogelsang.

⁵ H. Williams.

⁶ W. Logan.

horizontally twelve to eighteen inches from left to right (Wolgal).

Water.—Same as to drink (Dieri).⁴

Water bowl.—Hold the left hand upwards, partly closed. Then make a motion with it, as if scooping something out of the other hand (Dieri).⁴

Woman.—Point with the fingers to the breast (Wurunjerri). Indicate the breasts with both hands (Dieri).⁴ Make a circle with the forefinger of each hand round the breast (Dieri).⁴ Point to the breasts (Eucla).⁵

Yes.—Nod the head (Wurunjerri). Nod the head, or make a movement with the head as if catching a fly about a foot distant from the mouth (Dieri).⁴ Make a movement towards the ground with the open hand (Aldolinga).¹ Nod the head (Eucla).⁵

¹ Rev. H. Kempe.

⁴ Vogelsang.

⁵ H. Williams.