

IX 1a

CARVINGS, PAINTINGS, etc.

Early MSS.

Subject to correction from later
information received

It cannot be justly said that the West Australian natives are utter strangers to the fine arts. The multiplicity of drawings, paintings and carvings that are to be found all over the State give evidence of an artistic sense which, though crude in its development, is still a purely native possession. Whether the numerous paintings and drawings have had any religious significance in ages past is now a matter beyond even the possibility of conjecture for none of the natives have ever been able to explain the meaning of the many and various cave and rock paintings which the white people have discovered in various portions of this State. These examples of early aboriginal art - if they may be so termed - which the rocks and cliffs and caves of W.A. afford, evidence in many cases much ability and with perhaps one doubtful exception, appear to be entirely executed by the aborigines, unassisted by any knowledge gained by intercourse with persons of a different race. Moreover, it is stated on the authority of Grey and Stokes and other trustworthy writers who have recorded their discoveries of native art in W.A. that in no one instance has the eye been offended by the slightest trace of indecency in them, the aborigines proving in this sense superior to the Ancient Egyptians and Etruscans whose works have elicited so much admiration and afforded food for so much speculation.

The manufacture of the colours used by the natives in their various paintings, shows much ingenuity and have excited great interest from their nature and variety. According to Grey, seven colours were used in the paintings which he discovered in the neighbourhood of King's Sound - red, blue, yellow, brown, black, a bluish green (commonly called peacock blue) and white. Of the red more than one shade is obtained. The blue, as far as can be ascertained, is peculiar to the natives of Nor'West Australia and is not used in any other portion of Australia. All the other colours except blue are in use over the whole continent.

The red pigment is either dug up from the earth in the shape of small clayey pebbles, or where it is unobtainable it is manufactured from a bright yellowish clay, which obtains in those parts where the red ochre is not to be found. The yellow clay is cleaned, dried and beaten to a powder, then left exposed to the air for some days, and afterwards baked in a

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bark basket, when, if it has been properly attended to, it becomes a brilliant shade of red.

In places where neither the red nor yellow clay is found, the natives obtain it by exchange and barter with those tribes in whose country the precious paint is plentiful. For yellow, the yellow clay is used without any preparation. This colour can also be obtained from a certain kind of stone, through which run veins of yellow earth, also from the dust collected in the nests of a certain species of ant, and from a peculiar fungus which contains a yellow dust.

Black is simply charcoal very finely powdered.

White is a species of pipeclay, common all over Australia, and familiar to many of the first white settlers of this State who used it instead of lime for white washing their houses. Curiously enough, it was with some of the native pipeclay that a most interesting painting was lost. Captain Meares had painted in his cottage at Guildford, a stirring picture of the Battle of Pinjarrah which represented the natives of that district drawn up in battle array against a handful of white soldiers. On the artist's death the cottage was taken by an estimable lady, in whose eyes the "war paint" of the natives from the point of view of "clothing their nakedness" was totally inadequate, and the painting having been executed upon the walls of the cottage its gentle tenant saw no other way of effacing the offensive picture than by the application of pipeclay. Thus through an excess of modest zeal, the only pictorial reminiscence of this famous battle became lost.

It is ⁱⁿ the copper districts of the Nor'West that blue is more generally found. It is obtained from blue carbonate of copper which the native women grind into powder with their millstones and afterwards moisten with grease. Grey states that the blue used by the natives of the Nor'West was very dark and brilliant, and as it closely resembled the colour obtained from the seed vessel of a plant very common there and which on being broken yielded a few drops of a brilliant blue liquid, it was surmised by him that the paint was procured from this source.

It is not ascertainable how the brown and bluish green colours are obtained, but Dr. House thinks they are argillaceous earth of some kind.

One of the principal uses to which these pigments are put is in the adorning of the bodies of the natives for festive or warlike occasions. Yellow, red, black and white are the principal colours used in these personal decorations, and these are "laid on" sometimes in most intricate patterns. Each pattern has doubtless some symbolical significance, but all are marked with a certain amount of artistic skill and where the raised cicatrices are plentiful on the bodies of young males, these are accentuated by the manner in which the device is painted. The parts of the body which are ornamented are the breast, legs and back and face, the scars being cut on the shoulders, back, breast and arms.

There is not much scope for the display of artistic capacity in the matter of personal adornment, as, except in the variations of the patterns, the colours used on the body are always the same. Hence whatever of art exists amongst the natives must be looked for apart from their personal ornamentation. The abundant evidence of an artistic sense amongst the W.A. natives is however well shown in the carvings on weapons and rocks and the numerous cave paintings found throughout the State. The artistic instinct - if it may be so called - exists amongst the aborigines throughout Australia. The weapons of the natives all over the continent are either colored or carved, the shields taking precedence in having their surfaces both carved and painted. The throwing sticks, yam sticks and even the wooden utensils have all carvings on them of some kind or other, but the real art of painting is shown in the specimens to be found in various parts of W.A. on rocks, in caves and on the cliff sides. These are many and varied, although a certain family likeness or similarity of style is noticeable throughout. It is rather singular that the drawings and paintings found near the coast are infinitely inferior to those found far inland. The best seen and described by Sir George Grey were discovered some seventy miles from the sea coast, and there have been others equally good found in the very centre of Australia.

It is idle to speculate with the present meagre knowledge of this subject on the purpose which these cave drawings are intended to serve; whether they are symbolical of some early form of worship amongst the aborigines, or if they were merely executed with a view to working

upon the superstitious minds of the natives, in order that the medicine men, or sorcerers, might continue to exercise the powers handed down to them from successive generations.

There is no doubt that were this special subject followed up by explorers and others who, in the course of their travels would meet with examples of native art, much might be brought to light concerning the prehistoric lore of the earliest inhabitants of this continent. Every writer on W.A. who in his travels has come across these native paintings, testifies to their antiquity, and hence it is worth while preserving these records of ancient aboriginal art for future reference and investigation.

Ensign Dale was the first white man to discover native paintings in the Southern parts of W.A. He records the fact in Stirling's Journal (1831). "Near the Dyott Range, the party discovered a cavern," the interior being arched and resembling somewhat in appearance an ancient ruin. On one side was rudely carved what was evidently intended to represent an image of the sun, it being a circular figure about eighteen inches in diameter, emitting rays from its left side and having without the circle lines meeting each other nearly at right angles; close to this representation of the sun were the impression of an arm and several hands."

Grey discovered many examples of native art in his various expeditions throughout the State. The first was seen by him in the neighbourhood of Prince Regent River, where on some gouty stemmed trees "were several successive rows of notches, formed horizontally, all but the last row being invariably scratched out. These rows of notches were evidently of different ages, and I imagine must indicate the number of nuts taken each year from the tree. I often also found rude drawings scratched upon the trees, but none of these sketches indicated anything but a very ordinary degree of talent, even for a savage; some were so imperfect that it was impossible to tell what they were meant to represent."

Brough Smyth, I, 289

At Glenelg River, Grey states that on some of the basaltic rocks some drawings "were scratched....representing hands, heads and other parts of the human frame." But it was in the neighbourhood of the Glenelg and while endeavouring to cross a sandstone range that the most remarkable paintings were come upon. These curious productions according to Brough Smyth resemble in many respects those usually drawn by the natives of Victoria and other parts and the colours are similar to those employed by the Victorians. It is best perhaps to chronicle the discovery of these works of art in Grey's own words. Having searched vainly for a route through the sandstone range, he was proceeding to regain his party (page missing) (Grey's Journal, I, 201 et seq.)

Upon the rock which formed the left hand wall of this cave, and which partly faced you on entering, was a very singular painting, vividly coloured, representing four heads joined, together. From the mild expression of the countenances, I imagined them to represent females and they appeared to be drawn in such a manner and in such a position, as to look up at the principal figure which I have before described; each had a very remarkable headdress, coloured with a deep bright blue, and one had a necklace on. Both of the lower figures had a sort of dress, painted with red in the same manner as that of the principal figure, and one of them had a band round the waist. Each of the four faces was marked by a totally distinct expression of countenance, and although none of them had mouths, two, I thought, were otherwise rather good looking. The whole painting was executed on a white ground, and its dimensions were :-

Total length of painting 3' 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ "
 Breadth across two upper heads, 2' 6"
 Ditto across the two lower ones, 3' 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

The next most remarkable drawing in the cave was an ellipse, three feet in length and one foot ten inches in breadth; the outside line of this painting was of a deep blue colour, the body of the ellipse being of a bright yellow, dotted over with red lines and spots, while across it ran two transverse lines of blue. The portion of the painting described above formed the ground or main part of the

picture, and upon this ground was painted a kangaroo in the act of feeding; two stone spearheads and two black balls; one of the spearheads was flying to the kangaroo and one away from it, so that the whole subject probably constituted a sort of charm by which the luck of an enquirer in killing game could be ascertained.

There was another rather humorous sketch, which represented a native in the act of carrying a kangaroo; the height of the man being three feet. The number of drawings in the cave could not altogether have been less than from fifty to sixty, but the majority of them consisted of men, kangaroos, etc., the figures being carelessly and badly executed, and having evidently a very different origin to those which I have first described. Another very striking piece of art was exhibited in the little gloomy cavities situated at the back of the main cavern....Some rock at the sides of the cavity had been selected and the stamp of a hand and arm by some means transferred to it; this outline of the hand and arm was then painted black, and the rock about it white, so that on entering that part of the cave, it appeared as if a human hand and arm were projecting through a crevice admitting light."

Many writers have imagined that the painted caves in W.A. must have been at one time places of native worship and that the initiation ceremonies, the exclusion of women, prohibition of certain foods, belief in spirits and in a future life, the immortality of the soul, deification of men and women into stars, etc., all point to the probability of some form of religion having been known to the aborigines. But while the mystery of those cave paintings cannot be explained by the present day natives it is certain that there is no worship attached to them, and that they are held in no reverence has been demonstrated by the indifference of the natives to them. In some districts the caves are supposed to be inhabited by janga, and are consequently avoided.

(the above paragraph to be corrected.)

In the discovery of some headdresses used by the natives of this State, in some of their corroborations, fresh light is thrown on the subject of those "aureoles", for they resemble very closely those depicted by Grey in the paintings and with the rest of the work must have undoubtedly have been done by the natives, for it is highly improbable that strangers or ship wrecked persons would take the trouble necessary to obtain the various colours used in the decorations. A comparison of the Northern headdress and the "glory" round the heads of the figures will at once suggest the resemblance.

With reference to the characters on the headdress of the figures just mentioned, Mr. Worsnop in his "Aborigines of Australia" (21) mentions a theory which had been advanced by Dr. A. Carroll of Sydney, who states "that the languages of the Red Sea merchants can be read in the letters on the headdress of this figure and on the marks near the right arm. He supposes that these merchants traded with the Persian Gulf, Ceylon, India and Sumatra, from which, by some sudden storm, they might haply be carried to the N.W. coast of Australia and could have thus transmitted such characters as are shown in their headdress. He says that he was able to decipher the character formed upon this figure, and that the translation is: "I am a great personage, or chieftain of - (the north east country of the Red Sea)." Other writers have connected the characters with the Malayan, Sumatran (Mention also Rev. J. Mathew's theory.)

With regard to the age of the paintings which Grey discovered in the Nor'West, there has been no clue afforded up to the present which would present any guidance towards the solution of this problem. Grey is of opinion that they are very ancient for "although the colours were composed of such perishable materials, they were all mixed with a resinous gum, insoluble in water, and no doubt, when thus prepared, they would be capable of resisting for a long period, the usual atmospheric causes of decay. The painting which appeared... to have been the londest executed was the one clothed in the long red dress, but I came to this conclusion solely from its state of decay and dilapidation." Grey does not think it probable that they were executed by a self taught savage. He infers however from the

art and skill with which some of the figures were drawn, and the great effect which had been produced by such simple means that these paintings must have an influence upon the fears and superstitious feelings of the ignorant and barbarous natives. The position and arrangement of some of the most striking figures certainly bear out this conclusion.

Sadlier in commenting upon the caves and cave paintings (Aborigines, P. 17) thinks it not improbable that they may have been places of worship like the caves in India, from the offering of the kangaroo, and the seat for some presiding person, priest or doctor, and bases his opinion on the known facts in connection with native customs and ceremonies, the initiation of the young men, the exclusion of women, prohibition of certain food, their belief in spirits and a future condition, the deification of their chiefs into stars, the deification of heroes, and even of the lowest reptiles and animals. With all these forms and beliefs which have been religiously carried out through unknown ages it can hardly be thought that these people have always been entirely destitute of some form of religion.

Mr. R.M. Lyon records in the "Perth Gazette" of March 30th, 1833, an experiment made with a Perth native which had a very remarkable result. Some questions were being asked, and the native solicited pen, ink and paper for the purpose of answering them more satisfactorily. "He did not take a moment to think. The specimen is Hieroglyphical. It consists of men, animals, birds etc. and is traced in circles round the central character with which he began... But what surprised me most of all was his giving a character for an abstract term. This he did in more than one instance. The specimen would be considered as man's rudest attempt at letters by those who do not believe writing to have been coeval with language."

....but because flat rock faces and rock shelters are not available in this semi-desert land....these slips of bark are adapted by the talented of the tribe to display their skill upon.... There is this broad distinction between the rock paintings and the bark etchings, that in the first case single objects only are selected for representation, whereas in the bark etchings an attempt is made to reproduce more complex subjects. The markings are produced by means of a stylus of hard wood upon the freshly peeled bark. The air discolors the scratchings which become yet more visible through the gummy sap accumulating in them, and coagulating into minute globules."

Under the heading of carvings Helms includes the markings by charring with a pointed ember. He found message sticks, nose sticks and other articles marked in this way. The markings of the message sticks when not made with a pointed ember, were cut with a sharp edged piece of flint, and sometimes very fine lines were produced in this way. It is remarkable that Helms did not find a single weapon amongst the aborigines between Everard Range and Fraser Range that was ornamented with carvings of any kind, with the exception of a yilbar (bull roarer) seen near Fraser Range.

Further north and particularly in the Murchison district, nearly everything Helms saw was more or less carved, and not only is carving very common among the Murchison Tribe, but the designs were mostly of very superior execution and often very regularly outlined. Two examples of spear throwers are given, both elaborately carved, and a shield reproduced is perhaps one of the most accurately finished pieces of native workmanship that is to be found.

Seeing so many various designs on the yilbars Helms concluded that they were the special mark of the native who owned them and his own invention and not to be copied by any other member of the tribe, but he attached no special symbolic importance to the engravings on the yilbars because of there being no distinct repetition of any particular design to be found amongst them, all that they had in common being a leaning towards a zigzag character in the carvings.

In 1886, Mr. O'Donnell, travelling through the granite ranges in

the Kimberley country found in the caves drawings by the natives similar to those found by Sir George Grey on the Glenelg River in 1836.

With regard to the existence of a sort of symbolic hand impressed on rocks and caves throughout W.A., this representation has attracted great attention from ethnologists. The natives can either afford no information as to the signification of this emblem, or else the meaning is too mysterious to be communicated by them. This hand painting is done in three colours, black, white and red, the last mentioned having the greatest significance, as this "red hand" has been met with in all parts of the globe - in Egypt, the Holy Land, Arabia, India, Babylonia, Phoenicia, amongst the ruins of Mexico and Central America. According to some writers, it is supposed to record some mysterious ceremony, or to symbolise some ancient deity - a symbol which according to A.L. Plongeon, exists amongst the Mayas and Guiches of Central America. According

It is noticeable that the hand is always found painted in an uplifted position, never horizontal or downward. The red hand is painted with ochre, the hand being dipped in the red mixture and then pressed against the face of the rock. The surface ground is usually coated with charcoal so as to bring out the painting more distinctly. The "white hand" is merely the hand pressed against the smooth surface of white or light colored rock. Some charcoal is then moistened in the mouth and blown round the impression and between the fingers, making a perfect design. The "black hand" is painted with charcoal on a light ground.

Sir John Forrest in his journey of explorations in 1874 (when about midway between the city of Perth and the Overland Telegraph line) discovered several pieces of wood tied in bundles and fixed in the lower branches of some trees apparently for security, which were carved with grooves along them and cross grooves at intervals. They were evidently not intended for use, but for display and ornament. They were of a dull colour which had been darkened by rubbing in with grease and ochre.

A native art gallery was discovered by Mr. Harry Stockdale on the McLeod River, Kimberley, who made his "find" the subject of an interesting paper which he read before the Royal Geographical Society of Australia. "The river runs between immense cliffs from 200 to 300 feet high and almost perpendicular, on the large smooth slabs of which were a number of native drawings occupying a space of fully twenty yards and consisting of kangaroos, platypus, also a figure resembling a monkey, blackfellows dancing the corroboree, the bust of a native woman and many others, besides an excellent life size drawing, representing an emu feeding. The bird was true to nature and well done; the whole of the drawings were filled in or shaded, and showed much artistic taste, the mouths of the faces alone being badly represented."

Mr. Harry Stockdale also found "a little over 100 miles west of Cambridge Gulf, not far from the place where Sir George Grey made his discoveries...a large cave full of native drawings which he considered were more wonderful than Grey's and thirty or forty times more numerous."

It has been stated that a peculiar meaning was attached to the absence of a mouth on those figures discovered by Grey and others, the idea of secrecy and mystery being typified in this manner, and another theory put forward was that the native artist who saw the effect of his handiwork might have had a superstitious fear that if he added a mouth the figure might speak to him! (Mention the voice proceeding from the armpits.) From the amount of superstition which is inherent in the native character there is some probability in the latter suggestion.

It is well known that the aborigines have a system of picture writing and of intelligently conveying to other natives the meaning of messages by means of cuts and marks. Worsnop states that "tribal distinctions were also defined in the cutting or tattooing of some particular part of the human frame. In some of these hieroglyphics the untaught native has produced exactly the same lines, figures and ornamentation that laid the basis of the artistic designs of the great architects of Europe, Africa, Asia and America, such forms being in use there at the present day and adopted universally." (Worsnop's "Aborigines", 34) Subject to correction

In a paper read before the R.G.S. of Australasia, Mr. Joseph Bradshaw gives an account of a trip up the Prince Regent River, and furnishes some interesting descriptions of the cave drawings he met with in the neighborhood. (P. 11, vol. IX, 1892, with sketch.)

"We saw numerous caves and recesses in the rocks, the walls of which were adorned with native paintings, coloured in red, black, brown, yellow, white and a pale blue. Some of the human figures were life-size, the bodies and limbs very attenuated, and represented as having numerous tassel-shaped adornments appended to the hair, neck, waist, arms and legs; but the most remarkable fact in connection with these drawings is that wherever a profile face is shown, the features are of a most pronounced aquiline type, quite different from those of any native we encountered. Indeed, looking at some of the groups, one might almost think himself viewing the painted walls of an ancient Egyptian temple. These sketches seemed to be of great age, but over the surface of some of them were drawn in fresher colours smaller and more recent scenes, and rude forms of animals, such as the kangaroo, wallaby, porcupine, crocodile, etc. In one or two places we noticed alphabetical characters, somewhat similar to those seen by Sir George Grey in nearly the same latitude, but many miles westward, on the Glenelg River." (Mr. Bradshaw has supplied some rough sketches of the drawings.)

Mr. F.S. Brockman, Chief Inspecting Surveyor, in his report on the exploration of Nor'West Kimberley, made by him in 1903, makes the following reference to the cave paintings :-

"A remarkable custom of the aborigines of the Western part of the district South from Admiralty Gulf is that of painting representations of the human figure, beasts, reptiles, etc. on almost every available smooth, vertical face to be found in the sandstone ranges. Over the area in which these paintings occur, I frequently found the pigments used at the native camps and invariably have found them in every bundle of household goods abandoned by the natives on our approach. These pigments consist of several colours of oxide of iron, pipeclay and ground charcoal."

Dr. House who accompanied the Brockman expedition as naturalist says :- "The most interesting thing connected with these natives,

or rather with a certain section of them, is the custom they have of making drawings on suitable faces of rock. The first specimen of those which we met with....consisted of a row of figures. The place was one which had been used evidently for a great number of years for depositing the bones of the dead. The figures are clothed, and all in a similar style of garment, with what appears like a necktie just below the throat. Curiously, this same style of figure, similarly dressed, occurred wherever paintings of any extent were found. In all there is an absence of the mouth, and what appears to be a halo round the head. These figures agree in these particulars with those found by Grey on the Glenelg in 1837. The colours used are red, yellow, black and white, the black being charcoal, and the other colours argillaceous earth, specimens of which we found carefully wrapped up in paper bark parcels in most of the camps which had been vacated hurriedly owing to our approach. The drawings are finished with greater care and attention to detail than one would expect to find in such a primitive race and they apparently value them considerably, choosing places, as far as possible, where they will not be injured by the weather. In all the more elaborate drawings the colours appeared to have been simply mixed with water, and could be smudged by rubbing with the finger, but in one or two places on the Glenelg, I saw smaller drawings and marks in red which were made with some other pigment and were not affected even by wet. In the other drawings the snakes appear to be devouring human beings, and in one drawing eggs are shown inside the snake....That they (the natives) should adhere so closely to one design shows either a great lack of originality, or that they attach great importance to that particular figure. From the extent of the area over which these drawings occur I should imagine they are not peculiar to one tribe. We found none south of the Charnley River, and how far north they extend I do not know, but besides these others were found....Near camp 9 was found a single figure of the same design depicted on a piece of basalt, and deposited in a native hut which had been recently burnt."

Brockman found some excellent specimens of cave paintings on the banks of Bachsten Creek, also on the western cliffs of Prince Regent River gorge, these latter were however all of crude design and poor execution.

Again in the Princess May Ranges some native paintings were found.

Several photographs were taken of the paintings seen by Brockman's party and these have in most cases been reproduced in "Notes on Natural History" (1903) compiled by the Government Statistician and Registrar-General.

Mr. Helms states that at the Fraser Range where probably the red ochre is unobtainable, the natives use their own blood for the colouring of small things such as the nose stick, hair fastener, the interstices between the shaving balls of the hair ornament. To obtain the blood, they nick their thighs with the sharp edge of a small chip of flint which makes the blood flow gently and generally forms large beads over the incision. The articles to be coloured are rubbed over the wounds and the blood is afterwards more carefully spread with the tip of the finger. It is noteworthy that in this district red, the colour of blood, and blood go by the same name.

Nose sticks and message sticks are often very elaborately carved by the natives of West Australia. The former are made of wood or bone and are frequently not more than a quarter of an inch in diameter, yet upon this narrow surface emus, kangaroos, birds, etc. are excellently cut, sometimes these animals are merely outlined with a black pigment on the light surface of the wood or bone, but more frequently they are filled in with tiny black dots or transverse lines and though to European eyes the carvings are merely a jumble of hieroglyphics, yet an intelligent native will give an explanation for every mark or dot placed upon the stick.

The existence of the message sticks shows that the natives can communicate intelligence to tribes at a distance by symbols and that these symbols can be understood by the recipient, even if the Subject dialect is not the same, that is not true. The sticks to correction are formed of a hard yellowish wood, about seven or eight inches in length and two fifths of an inch thick, rounded and tapering towards each end the points being sometimes cut off leaving the ends flat. They are either straight or curved. In W.A. they are frequently sent to distant tribes in cases of hostility and other matters connected with tribal customs.

Curr states (Australian race, vol. I, P. 149) that every Australian tribe has its messenger, whose life, while in the performance of his duties is held sacred in peace and war by the neighbouring tribes. This is one of the amenities of aboriginal life. The duties of the messenger are to convey the messages which his tribe desires to send to its neighbours and to make arrangements about places of meeting on occasions of fights or corroborees.

Curr does not think from the cases that came under his own observation, that the message sticks convey any information, as the messenger usually delivered his message before presenting the carved stick. He asserts therefore that they do not serve the purpose of writing or hieroglyphics, but nevertheless is of opinion that the childish proceeding of the recipient of the message who affects to explain how the stick portrays the intelligence verbally delivered to him, may lead a person to consider whether the most savage mind does not contain the germ of writing.

Brough Smyth gives illustrations of two carved message sticks which were sent to him from W.A. by the late Sir F.P. Barlee. One of these is ten inches in length and a little more than three tenths of an inch in diameter. The other is nearly seven and a half inches long and four tenths of an inch in diameter.

Brough
Smyth's
Aborigines
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They are formed of a hard yellowish wood, the name of which is not given (probably jamwood). The marks are neatly and clearly drawn and are filled in with a black pigment, so as to be distinctly seen. They were obtained from the aborigines in the vicinity of Shark's Bay.

These message sticks are regarded by scientific men as of peculiar interest and value and special inquiries into this subject might result in the discovery as to what extent this system of conveying intelligence amongst the aborigines prevails, how it was originated, and to what state of perfection it has reached. A correspondent of Brough Smyth stated that the peculiarly formed notches on a stick convey the ideas of the natives in a manner similar to the knots on a cord used in the days of old by the Mexicans. The same correspondent adds that a friend of his, having decided on a new station...started...with a lot of cattle, having with him several blacks. When the settler was about to return home, one of the young natives asked him if he would carry a letter to his - the blacks - father, and on expressing his willingness to do so, the young man gave him a piece of stick, about one foot in length which was covered with notches and lines. On reaching home, the settler went to the black's camp and delivered the letter to the father, who thereon called together all the blacks that were living with him, and to the settler's great surprise, read off from the stick a diary of the proceedings of the party day by day from their departure till their arrival at the new station, describing accurately the country through which they had travelled and the places where they had camped each night.

Worsnop states that the sticks "were always intended as an aid to the memory of the bearer of the stick from one tribe to another, or in recording events which they deemed worthy of being held in remembrance.

Aborigines
of
Australia
P. 47 et seq.

Most of the message sticks seen in West Australia are round,

very few flat surfaces being seen. The carving too is more elaborate and of more delicate execution than in the other portions of the continent, and if as Curr states, no meaning is attached to the heiroglyphics it is very extraordinary that such pains should be taken in their ornamentation, as the work requires very delicate manipulation. Moreover when the crude instruments of the natives are taken into account it is little short of marvellous that such fine lines and dots and markings could be produced by their aid. It has been noticed by nearly all travellers in W.A. that the natives are much more expert in carving with their own native implements than with the European knives or iron tomanawks, their lines are finer and they have a surer touch with those weapons they have been familiar with from childhood. Any carving done with the European tools alone is very coarsely done and as Flinders said of the weapons manufactured by the King George's Sound natives with modern tools "are like Peter Findar's razors, only made to sell".

Of the message sticks which Helms saw in his journey across W.A. those he met with at Fraser Range were the best. "The heiroglyphics are produced with a pointed ember, or by scratching with a sharply pointed, hardened piece of wood, pointed bone, or sharply edged chip of flint and then rubbing the incisions over with ochre. Very fine lines are produced by the stone chip." (Helms Anthropology, 271)

In the same district the nose sticks which are over ten inches long are usually ornamented with lines winding round them, which are produced by charring with pointed embers. Diagonal and wavy lines are to be seen on the specimens illustrated in Helms' work, and also some very thin ones with rather intricate patterns.

Nearly all the specimens seen were most elaborately carved, each one having a different pattern, some diagonally worked, others in straight lines or diamond patterns, the lines are usually made across the flat surface of the board, but there is a specimen shown by Mr. Helms upon which the lines are drawn lengthwise in a fanciful pattern.

The carving on the throwing boards is also done transversely, but it is not nearly so elaborate nor so intricate as that on the bullroars.

The carved and painted shield shown in Mr. Helms' work is one of the most highly finished and also the most regular pattern of any

hitherto seen in the West.

At Fraser Range Mr. Helms observed the natives making message sticks from acacia wood. The wood was worked down with the stone chisel fastened at the end of the spearthrower, and afterwards scraped smooth with the sharp edge of a chip of flint. The lines were put on with embers. A piece of hard stick is chosen that will form a well tapered conical ember on one end. This is fairly firm to stand a gentle pressure and lasts for some time. Whilst the spiral or wavy lines are put on the ember is kept aglow by gentle blowing.

At Fraser Range also some etchings on bark made by the natives, representing some crudely drawn landscapes and other objects were obtained by Mr. Helms. These etchings were called *worma* by the natives. They are produced on the inner side of the bark while it is still fresh by a pointed piece of hard wood.

Mr. J.H. Gregory of Northam states that he has seen several paintings on rocks in the district, but it is difficult to decipher what they represent, or mean. He thinks they are painted with grease and *wilgie* which they make out of a certain clay by burning.

Mr. J. Withnell states that the Roebourne natives "have very many rock carvings; every hill that has suitably hard stone will have some kind of figure tattooed thereon. They do not choose the softer rocks and mainly prefer the basalt and granite. (Withnell's Pamphlet 29) The method adopted is to draw the outline with chalk or ochre and with a sharp hard stone hammer within the outline until the rock is fretted away about one-eighth of an inch deep. Some of the figures are very large while others are small. None of the outlines show much aptitude for drawing. The head is round, then a straight line much smaller than the head represents the trunk of the body. A slighter line on each side represents the arms, with a bend for the elbow, and a large ball at the end of each of these lines represents the hands. Each leg is the same size as the body, with enormous feet, the whole being greatly out of proportion. Some, however, are done a little better, but others so badly that they need explaining. The carvings are mainly represented of men, kangaroos, rats, opossums, turkeys, fishes, spears, shields, native weapons of

all kinds etc.

The first carvings Mr. Durlacher saw in W.A. were some rude carvings of men, fish and animals in the rough hill ranges surrounding Hampton Harbor and the adjoining country extending to the "Flying Foam Passage". He also came across carvings in the wild broken ranges that form a barrier between the great plains bordering on the coast and the tableland country. According to the same authority, the "red hand" has been found on many cave or cliff walls in all parts of the country. This painting is done by immersing the hand in a solution of red clay and grease, forming a red ochre commonly called "wilgee" and then the hand is pressed on the smooth surface of the rock, leaving the imprint of a perfect hand. The carvings are done with a heavy sharp flint stone.

The only carvings seen in the Sherlock district were animals' foot marks and the human hand, the latter being merely the impression of the hand which had previously been "wilgied" or the hand itself was pressed against the rock and powdered charcoal was placed in the mouth, moistened and blown between the fingers of the hand, so as to leave a distinct outline.

The method of executing the rock carvings in the North and North West is as follows :- The outline is first drawn with a burnt stick on some smooth faced rock, which may be either an exposed surface rock, the side of a cliff, a boulder or any suitable projection, having the desired quality of smoothness. A piece of sharp flint, chipped or ground to an edge, is then used to make a band or groove along the lines of the charcoal sketch and in a short time the drawing - if in outline only - is finished. This outline drawing was practised by the Port Hedland natives on the sandstone rocks along the coast.

Further inland where granite and basalt rocks obtain, grooved lines are not easily made with the rough implements the natives use. On these rocks therefore the whole space inside the outline is chipped away to a depth varying from about a sixteenth to a quarter of an inch. Many carvings of this kind may be seen on Depuch Island, and on some of the rocks in the Fortescue and Yule Rivers.

From the difference in colour between the freshly cut surface

and the surrounding rock, many of the carvings, notably those on Depuch Island, look as though they had been carved in relief. This kind of carving is to be found on the rocks on the Upper Murchison, Gascoyne, Ashburton, Shaw, De Grey, Lyndon and other rivers, and in most of the Nor'West districts where there are suitable rock surfaces near the natives' camping places.

Mr. H.A. Wall says in connection with the number of rock pictures on Depuch Island, "It would take hours to discover and count approximately all the drawings in the one gully I examined, still I think it is safe to say there are about a hundred. But there are many gullies on the island and I am led to believe there are drawings, more or less, in most of them."

Captain Wickham in his "Notes on Depuch Island" (1842) describes the "vast number of specimens of art" which he saw.

Native paintings have been discovered on the Ord, Margaret, Fitzroy, Fraser, Lennard, Murchison, Ashburton and Fortescue Rivers and at Hall's Creek and also Sturt Creek. They are principally kangaroos, reptiles, human hands and feet, and native weapons. Red ochre, white pipeclay, and charcoal are the colours chiefly used in these paintings and the manner of executing them is similar to that already described in this chapter.

J.R. Chisholm found paintings of red hands and other carvings and drawings on cliffs in the neighbourhood of Mount Sturgeon Station, north Queensland. Most of the carvings consisted of heads with haloes over them and in some places there were rows of feet and hands, in others the feet of birds were most accurately drawn. A remarkable feature of the hand drawings was that they all pointed upwards. It will be noticed that the figures with the haloes are evidently similar to the figures discovered by Grey on the Glenelg. The position of the "hands" also corresponds to those that have been discovered by Grey, Brockman and others in the Kimberley and elsewhere in W.A. (Science of Man, January, '03)

In the Yuin district some native carvings have been seen by R.J. Carlyon. Their method of carving is somewhat similar to that followed by the natives of the Nor'West which consists of first marking an outline with charcoal of the animal or bird which the artist selects, and then tapping or indenting the outline with the aid of a sharp piece of flint. There are several carvings of animals etc. on the granite rocks about this part of the Greenough River.

There are no carvings or paintings of any kind in the Busselton district. Mr. Whitchurch says that the old natives would not enter a cave, as they imagined it to be the abode of a nyorlin (evil spirit). (Baabur, Nyilgee and Ngalgart call the caves "janga karup", the ghosts' or spirits' "holes".)

Dr. A. Carroll, Editor of "Science of Man" states that the drawings and paintings discovered by Grey and others in the Nor'West district are "the most extraordinary antiquities of Australia", and advocates the formation of an expedition to explore all the caves and rock shelters of W.A. and obtain photographs of these most interesting relics before they are injured or destroyed.

(Science of Man, Sept. '02, p. 124.)

Mr. G.S. Woodley states that he has seen carvings of emu's feet also dogs' and human feet cut into the granite, with flint and quartz chips. (Murchison district)

With reference to the carvings on the Glenelg and elsewhere in W.A., Dr. Carroll believes they were executed by various races, as follows :

1st by the aborigines
 2nd by the Malay fishers
 3rd by Malaccan voyagers
 4th by the Torres Strait Islanders
 5th by some other peoples who carved and painted the figures found by Sir George Grey. These figures (except the carved hand) were drawn without mouths, this peculiarity being also noticed in the drawings discovered in Ancient America and other countries signifying, Dr. Carroll says, "that they (the figures) no longer spoke or breathed, that they were dead." The Egyptians had a religious rite to re-open the mouth of the dead before burial. The various red and black hands were the sign of magic and sorcery and have been found in Europe and America and other lands.

The Southern natives had names for four colours only : red, wilgee; yellow, yoornda; white, dur-dar, and black moorn.

The blue stone of Greenmount from which they made their hammers was called bwyee moorn, "black rock". Greenmount was known as Yeer-dgop katta.

Their implements were chipped, never ground. The stone was chipped with another piece of the same kind, until the desired edge or sharpness was obtained. Peeka (Xanthorrhoea resin) was mixed with sand and charcoal and used in fitting the stone into a sharp pointed handle. (The Tasmanian paleoliths were without handles.)

(To be corrected)

Ernest Giles in his overland journey through Central and West Australia describes the method of painting the hand on rocks and caverns. (Giles' Aus. Twice Traversed, vol. I, 78)

"The drawing is done by filling the mouth with charcoal powder if the device is to be black, if red with red ochre powder, damping the wall where the mark is to be left and placing the palm of the hand against it with the fingers stretched out; the charcoal or ochre powder is then blown against the back of the hand; when it is withdrawn it leaves the space occupied by the hand and fingers clean, while the surrounding portions of the wall are all black or red as the case may be."

In the Perth Gazette of Nov. 5, 1836, F.F. Armstrong, Native Interpreter, mentions some examples of drawings etc. of the natives, which came under his observation. "Besides the rude drawings in the cavern of the moon two throwing sticks have been in the hands of the Interpreter, containing engravings, effected by a splinter of quartz, of which one, according to the explanation given by the natives themselves, represents an emu chase, the other the battle of Pinjarra. The first shows the feet (but no more) of the hunters and the emu, the place or cover from whence the emu started, and the fire at which it was afterwards cooked. The second displays a river, represented by two lines drawn across the board, and on the banks are outlines of human and horse's feet, and the graves of the

slain. The first is the production of some northern tribe, the second of a Murray River artist."

Curr states (Australian Race, vol. I, P. 96) that as a rule the wood carving of the natives is made of patterns worked out with straight lines, the curve being very difficult to manage with the flints, shells and bones which they use for carving. In carving on stone, curved lines are more common and in paintings they are often met with. In the carving and painting of the different tribes a great family likeness prevails. This writer joins with Grey, Stokes and others in noting the absence from Australian paintings of any indelicate subject.

Colours which Bradshaw states were used in the drawings in Prince Regent River locality were : red, black, brown, yellow, white, and a pale blue.

Sir George Grey says seven colours were in use amongst the N.W. natives : red (of which there were several shades), yellow, blue, black, white, brown and a bluish green.

Aboriginal ArtMural Painting, Carving on Implements etc., Personal decoration

Mural painting appears to have been introduced into West Australia similarly with the customs of circumcision and subincision, as, with very few exceptions, paintings and drawings on rocks and cliff faces and on trees are only found amongst the tribes practising those customs.

The specimens of native art that have been discovered in the neighborhood of the Glenelg and Prince Regent Rivers and in other places in Northern Kimberley are greatly superior to the ordinary aboriginal level of art and show that the natives possess a certain artistic taste, however crude their attempts at reproduction may be. All their decorations and paintings are done with the intention of pleasing the eye which, with native as with the highest civilised artist, is undoubtedly the chief stimulant for such attempts.

This desire to captivate the attention of the onlooker is more particularly observable in the ornamenting of their bodies with attractive pigments and in the elaborate headdresses of feathers, string or whatever will embellish the effect it is intended to produce.

Aboriginal art is expressed in many ways, by mural paintings, rock carvings, linear and other designs on weapons, implements, rugs.

On a sandstone ridge near Pt. Hedland and extending to the westward there are numerous impressions of animals, fish and the tracks of both, which have been chipped into the soft stone by the natives. Many rock carvings also may be seen at Nullagine and Hillside. In the Roebourne district are murree (drawings, carvings or paintings) of snakes, kangaroo, emus, etc.

The designs found on Depuch, on the Port Hedland and Hillside and other rock faces are entirely artistic productions, the natives resting in the vicinity continually adding to the number. No magic is attached to the hand and foot paintings.

Except the recumbent figure of mamman, I have heard of no ground drawings in W.A. The rock paintings and tree etchings differ from each other.

Lines and dots

Magical designs (walmarinbul's snake) and purely artistic productions, and also the cave drawings.

In the Centre of W.A. all cave paintings seen appear to have been done in white pipeclay.

Gum Creek, Murchison

Granite rock have carvings of emus, dogs and men cut in with flint and quartz (outlined).

song - ngoorba

Nyingarree, Peak Hill

Paintings on granite rocks weela karaaja = name of paint (magic paint?)
jeela = snakes, beemarra = spring, beegoorda = kangaroo, all magic. No one can drink the water at Meekatharra where these paintings are, except the doctors. A real spring is looked after here by a real snake.

Murray, Ngalyart

Large scars mardaring, small ones, ngombain.

Carvings, none. Trees were marked to signify fishing places or ceremonial (dancing) ground.

Song - eetee wangain, music eetee wanga, dance kaaning, gaaning.

The beering are our sisters and they eat the joogoordoo or bal'ngan-joonoo (grubs).





Nooloo = ordinary dance

Wallungarree = circle and dance for balgy-balellee.

Wallawallong or moorloo for jamunungur.

Gweeyanbiddee, after one part of Wallungarree is finished. Another wallungarree may follow Gweeyanbiddee.

Tracks of mullet, flathead, made by these fish on the mud in the shallow waters, are reproduced on rocks so the womba can tell the fish that is meant by the marks.

A jiwowel mark is  a circle; ngaiara mark is  a coil; mullet is  strokes; stingaree sleeping, a diamond  ; Another jiwowel mark, with ngaiara drinking round it is as follows :



Paintings done with jeewa, a red ochre, emu tracks, snakes, kallees, hand and feet, men and women. At Woorgarung between Boolerdee and Townsends, 5 miles from Cue.


Their phallic emblems sculptured by the Kimberley natives show how with their crude flint weapons they can reproduce symbols which are immediately recognised.


The simplest message sticks are the notched ones, the most elaborate from the Gascoyne and Ashburton districts. Nearly all require interpretation by the carrier. The markings consist of notches, zig zag lines and conventional patterns. The principal drawings and rock drawings are found in Kimberley and in some inland places, but these apparently take their rise from the Kimberley.

Yuin Outlines of animals are "chipped" with stone on granite and other rocks.

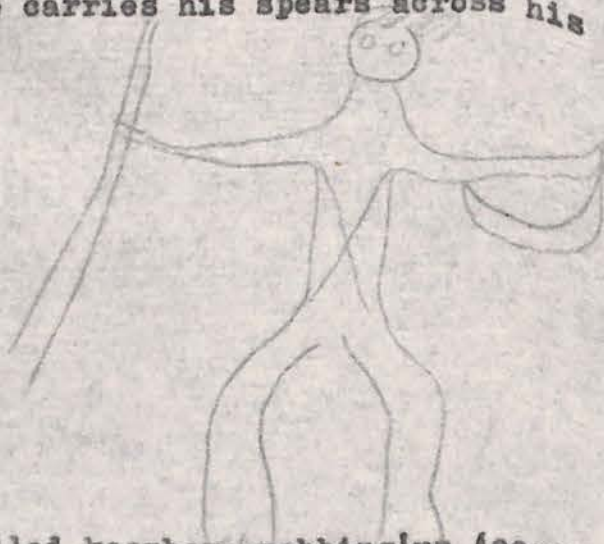
Billinge, informant (Broome)

Drawings and Paintings


Tracks of various fish were reproduced on the rocks or cave walls. These marks showed which fish was meant. For instance the circle showed the mark the jirovel made on the mud. The coil showed the ngai'ara, the strokes  showed the mullet, joordoobarrain, and the diamond the stingray, jin'nebee sleeping. The following marks were thus explained.

The crossed line is the jirovel and its tail.  The coils round it are the ngaiara drinking and the circle in the centre is also the jirovel.

Markings on shields, kylees etc. are made on the binjimen baaloo, and a mungoorl is sometimes thrown into the soft wood and left there. Lanjees are also thrown. Reerrwal or Cork tree is also pierced with the mungoorl which is left sticking in the wood. A womba is sometimes painted on the rocks in the attitude of spearing fish. His binjin is carried on one arm and his mungoorl is held in his right hand. He spears the fish and puts them in his binjin. Sometimes he carries his spears across his arms, sometimes held downwards.



They are called koombara mabbing'un (eenambil'nga - drawing)

Billinge's own mark would be thus  his beeroo jajjala north, the Walningbeeroo and river between and his father's beeroo (also his) south. Any womba seeing these would say, Jajjala beeroo ee'nambilnga (Jajjala man did this.)

Billinge's own mark would be thus