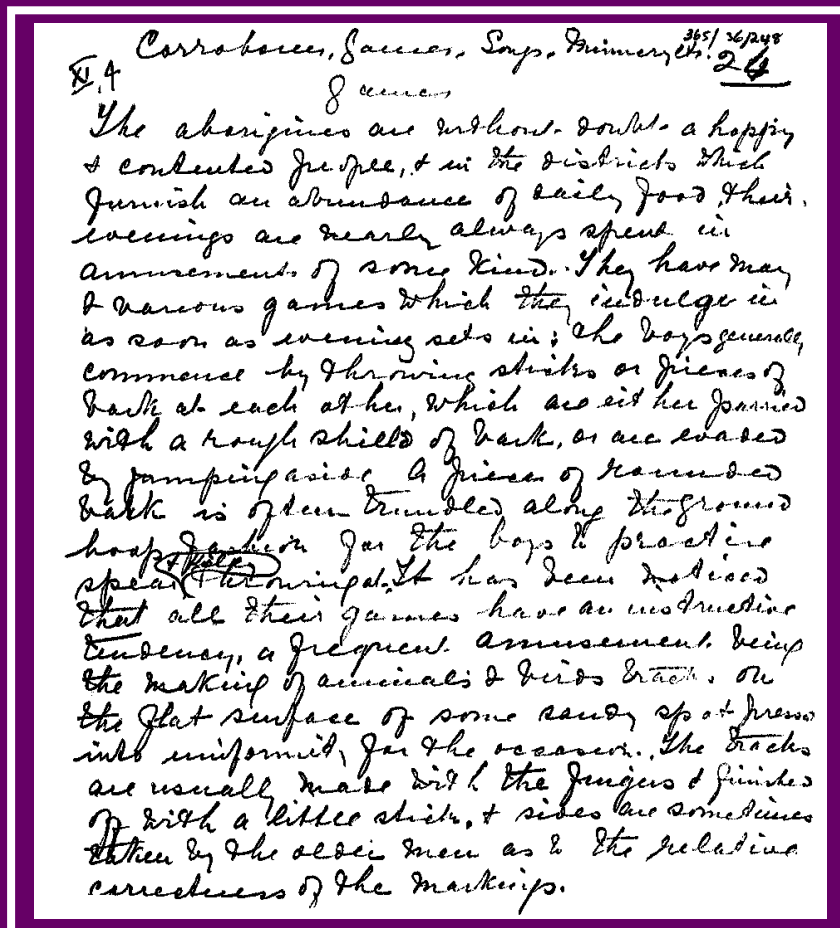


# Games and Amusements of Australian Aboriginal peoples as outlined in the 'Papers of Daisy Bates': principally dealing with the south west region of Western Australia.



Daisy M. Bates

Ken Edwards (compiler and transcriber)

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**Games and Amusements of Australian Aboriginal peoples as outlined in the 'Papers of Daisy Bates': principally dealing with the south west region of Western Australia.**

**Bates, Daisy May**

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Released through the College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (**CISER**) at **USQ** and with the support and approval of Professor Tracey Bunda.

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The Bates authorised typescripts and other papers have been digitised by the Barr Smith Library, The University of Adelaide

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For biographical information on Daisy May Bates (1863-1951) refer to the Australian Dictionary of Biography (online): <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bates-daisy-may-83>

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**National Library of Australia manuscript collection:  
MS 365 Papers of Daisy Bates**

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## Introduction

Daisy May Bates (1859–1951) was a social worker and anthropologist who lived with Aboriginal people for more than thirty years and wrote about their language and customs. Much of her extensive collection of information, papers, photograph and other materials were acquired by the National Library in 1941.

*Bates, Daisy. M. Papers of Daisy Bates. Manuscript held at the National Library of Australia, Canberra, A.C.T., 19--.*

The information presented in this publication is intended to provide an overview of work by Daisy M. Bates outlining games and amusements of Aboriginal peoples, especially from the south west region of Western Australia. It was collated and re-organised in an attempt to provide a clear and easy to access outline.

To many people Daisy Bates is an unreliable source on many aspects of Aboriginal life and lore. The information presented provides an opportunity to evaluate her work.

The task of presenting this work has been undertaken for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (particularly from the geographic areas focused on), researchers and others interested in information on this topic.

**Ken Edwards**



## **Daisy Bates overview**

Daisy Bates (1859-1951) was a welfare worker and amateur anthropologist of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this time she collected and published extensively regarding the living conditions and lifestyles of Aboriginal people from part of South Australia and Western Australia. Bates commented on a range of social issues through describing the lifestyle and habits of those in her care. She published in a variety of forums and was considered an expert in anthropology of Aboriginal peoples despite a lack of formal qualifications in the area. She is credited with the statement that one should “smooth the dying pillow of the race” as the required white policy towards Indigenous Australians. Bates generally tended to the very old, the very young and the sick. She believed that the healthy should be left to fend for themselves living as far as possible, untouched by the influence of modern European civilisation.

### **As an ethnographer**

Her recorded observations reflected her support of the Dying Race theory and in recent times her work has come under closer scrutiny and doubt has been cast on the validity of her accounts of the behaviours of those she observed. In recording the behaviours of the ‘natives’ both accuracy in the recording of the data (from an observer’s or a participant’s perspective) and objectivity is crucial. It is the accuracy and objectivity of the published Bates accounts that has been the subject of controversy and disagreement.

For example, in a discussion of the Aboriginal Cricket Team of 1868 in a 1924 article, Bates linked their skill and success with racially assumed characteristics of physical ability, associating their keenness of sight and quickness of feet with the lack of use of shields and the spear and club throwing and dodging of their fighting days.

### **The Papers of Daisy Bates**

The manuscript material that has been reviewed for this publication is found in more than 53 boxes at the National Library of Australia and this provides a great deal of information about Aboriginal people. Although her popular works have been studied and criticised, her extensive collection of field notes and materials provided by informants is of greatest interest in ethno-historical research.

## **Manuscript material organisation**

A thorough review was made of all materials in the collection, including handwritten notes and drafts of articles as well as various undated typescripts. Accounts of games and amusements form a small fraction of the total information in the manuscript collection, and in many cases the accounts are disjointed, scattered and varied in detail. It is also not always clear what historical period of time Bates is referring to in her accounts.

In addition to presenting various accounts of games and amusements this publication seeks to document where accounts varied and where consistencies are found. In this regard a ‘final’ version is presented (with superscript referencing of folio and page number) and additional or relevant information (also with superscript referencing) has been incorporated. Hopefully, this approach provides for a good level of understanding

of the information presented and provides an insight into the intentions of Daisy Bates. Although it would be useful to put Bates' accounts alongside other accounts of games and amusements from the area in order to be fully evaluated this has not been undertaken. Caution should be used when reading the accounts with regard to the use of historical sources by Bates which were not always acknowledged. To partly address this matter an attempt has been made to include the full reference for other texts referred to by Bates.

With the exception of the section headed *Games and Amusements* all the accounts have been organised into alphabetical order. For example, all the information on areas such as corroborees has been presented in the one section. The headings used are often those used by Bates but some have been re-named or developed to reflect the information. Some minor typographical or spelling errors have been corrected but consistency of spelling between accounts has not.

In addition to the general outline of games and amusements language references to play from different areas of the manuscript collection have been compiled. A separate section (to games and amusements) outlines some original notebook or informant materials that Bates used to inform her writing. It is interesting to see how she has applied some of this information. The other information presented includes an extract from a newspaper article which includes mention of games. A list of references of work by Bates and which contain mention of games and amusements is also included.

## Organisation of manuscript materials

### - MS365 Papers of Daisy Bates

**Creator:** Bates, Daisy, 1859-1951

**Title:** Papers of Daisy Bates

**Date range:** 1833-1990

**Extent:** 10.47 m. (53 boxes) + 2 fol. boxes.

**Reference number:** MS 365

- **MS 365**
- **Box** – [box number not always available]
- **Section** [not always used]
- **Folio** – this denoting and the page number are the most commonly used in this publication for convenience and ease of checking.
- **Page(s)**

### • Examples of full references:

◆ MS 365 88/588 [Newspaper article] Bates, Daisy.  
Children of the Stone Age: The Little Primitives of Australia.

◆ MS 365 36/102-104  
Cornally, informant Gascoyne. Notebook 3b, P.181 [-184].

◆ MS 365 Box 18 Section XI Dances, Songs Part 1.  
(a) Games, amusements. folio 36/86-106  
(b) Games, amusements – additional notes. folio 36/107-117

• **Text examples:**

Games are called *kambong*, *kombong*, *wab'wabba*, *ngabong*, *wabbain nyinning* etc., each district having separate equivalent.<sup>34/48 and 36/91</sup> [Their games, which in the South were called *kombang*, were of various kinds.<sup>36/100</sup>]

<sup>34/48 and 36/91</sup> This would refer to folio 34, page 48 and folio 36, page 91. In this example the information was the same in both places.

<sup>36/100</sup> This indicates information or draft material from another place which more fully informs.

## **Manuscript materials reviewed for information on games and amusements**

### **Box 17 Section XI Dances, Songs. Part 1.a. Dances and song**

- (a) Dances and songs. folio 34/1-136 1.
- (b) Native art, dances, songs, games etc. folio 34/137-267
- 1. *Native art, dances, songs, games etc. folio 34/268-399 1.*
- (a) Dances and songs. MSS. folio 34/400-500
- 1.(a) Native art, corroborees, songs, dance, games. MSS. folio 34/501-607

### **Box 18 Section XI Dances, Songs Part 1.**

- (b) (i) Series of ceremonies Eucla district natives. folio 35/1-61
- (ii) Ngardian or Yingan Eucla district. folio 35/62-76
- (iii) Additional Eucla district songs and corroborees. folio 35/77-104
- (iv) A collection of notes on corroborees, ceremonies and songs of the Ooldea district. folio 35/105-124
- (d) Corroborees, songs etc, Broome and N.W. Western Australia. folio 35/125-144
- (e) Corroborees and songs – Murchison. folio 35/145-159
- (e) Corroborees, games etc folio 35/160-207
- (c) Corroborees and songs. MSS. folio 35/208-220
- (d) Corroborees and songs. MSS. folio 35/221-233
- (e) Corroborees, games etc. MSS. folio 35/234-332
- Part 2. Joobytych's information. Songs, dances, S.W. W.A. folio 36/1-30*
- Part 3.*
- (a) (ii) Additional collection of songs. folio 36/31-64
- (i) Native songs, Perth, Vasse, Gingin etc. folio 36/65-85
- (a) Games, amusements. folio 36/86-106
- (b) Games, amusements – additional notes. folio 36/107-117
- Part 5.*
- Smoke signalling, sign language. folio 36/118-141
- Part 2.*
- Joobytych's information. MSS. folio 36/142
- Part 3.*
- (a) (i) Native songs, Perth, Vasse, Gingin MSS. folio 36/143-180
- (ii) Additional songs. MSS. folio 36/181-223
- Part 4.*

(c) Games, amusements. MSS. folio 36/224-251

Part 5. Smoke signalling. MSS. folio 36/252-265

### **Box 19 Section XII Language: Grammar and Vocabularies**

Part 1. Outline of Grammar folio 37/1-93

Outline of Grammar folio 37/94-188

Part 2. Outline of Grammar with vocabularies folio 37/189-329

Part 1. Outline of Grammar. Copy with annotated by Prof. Brown folio 37/330-522

Part 2. Outline of Grammar with vocabularies MSS. folio 38/1-74  
Part 1. Outline of Grammar. MSS. folio 38/75-374

### **Box 25 Section XII Language : Grammar and Vocabularies Part 2. D.**

12. T. Carter – Point Cloates

J.H. Monger – Gascoyne Edward Cornally – Gascoyne & Ashburton

T.L. Richardson – Gascoyne Rev. E.R. Gribble – Gascoyne River. folio 50/1-44

12. Rev. E.R. Gribble – Gascoyne. MSS. folio 50/45-46

13. S.H. Mears – Tableland F. Cornish – Roebourne J.O. Brown – Roebourne F.A.  
Wedge – Port Hedland Charles

Harper – De Grey River Hon. F.R. Barlee – Shaw River A.R. Richardson – Nichol Bay  
R. Walcott – Nichol Bay. folio 50/47-100

13. J.O. Brown – Roebourne. MSS. folio 50/101-104

S.H. Mears – Roebourne. MSS. folio 50/105 F.A. Wedge – Port Hedland. MSS. folio  
50/106-112

12 T. Carter, J.H. Monger E. Cornally, T.L. Richardson Rev. E.R. Gribble. MSS. folio  
50/113

12. Tom Carter – Ashburton. MSS. folio 50/114

### **Box 3 Section III Social Organisation**

Part 1 Tribes of W. A. folio 5/1-154

Tribes of W. A. folio 5/155-288

**folio 88/554-591** List of articles published in *My Magazine* and *Arthur Mee's Thousand Heroes*.

## Games and Amusements

The first section covered is general information on games and amusements from various parts of the manuscript and the other sections are arranged alphabetically either by the name given by Daisy Bates or another designated name.

### • Games and Amusements

Games are called *kambong*, *kombong*, *wab'wabba*, *ngabong*, *wabbain nyinning* etc., each district having separate equivalent.<sup>34/48</sup> and <sup>36/91</sup> [Their games, which in the South were called *kombang*, were of various kinds.<sup>36/100</sup>]

The natives [*nyungars*] are without doubt a happy and laughter loving people, and in those coastal and inland areas where the supply of food is abundant and continuous, their evenings are generally given over to amusements of some kind. [The aborigines are without doubt a happy and contented people and in the districts which furnish an abundance of daily food, their evenings are nearly always spent in amusements of some kind.].<sup>36/113</sup>

Pl. 4 Carrotrees, Saccas, Sops, Timmer, <sup>365/36/248</sup> 24  
I am  
The aborigines are without doubt a happy & contented people, & in the districts which furnish an abundance of daily food, their evenings are nearly always spent in amusements of some kind. They have many & various games which they indulge in as soon as evening sets in; the boys generally commence by throwing sticks or pieces of bark at each other, which are either passed with a rough shield of bark, or are evaded by jumping aside. A piece of rounded bark is often trundled along the ground hoop-fashion for the boys to practice spear-throwing. It has been noticed that all their games have an instructive tendency, a frequent amusement being the making of animals' & birds tracks on the flat surface of some sandy spot pressed into uniformity for the occasion. The tracks are usually made with the fingers & finished off with a little stick, & sides are sometimes taken by the older men as to the relative correctness of the markings.

They have many and various games which they indulge in as soon as evening sets in; the boys generally commence by throwing sticks or pieces of bark at each other, which are either parried with a rough shield of bark, or are evaded by jumping aside. A piece of rounded bark is often bundled along the ground hoop fashion for the boys to practise spear and kyley throwing at.<sup>36/113</sup>

All natives are fond of imitating the habits of animals.<sup>36/n.p.</sup> The dramatic rendering of these fireside tales is absolutely perfect, particularly in the 'animal stories' as, even if the hearer is ignorant of the dialect, but is familiar with the habits of Australian birds and animals, the gesticulations of the reciter will at once make known to him the animal or bird which forms the chief subject of the story. The 'bobbing' of the cockatoo on branch or twig, will be rendered with the utmost fidelity, and so with other familiar habits of birds and beasts.<sup>36/95</sup>

These games were carried on with the utmost good humour, and fair play was characteristic of all of them. A foul stroke or unfair proceeding in any game was resented by the friends of both sides, but if an accident really happened which resulted in the death of a native, no revenge was taken, as the accident happened during a *kombang*.<sup>36/100</sup>

#### ● **Games, Amusements**<sup>36/88-99</sup>

The information presented in this section represents a re-organisation of the section on **Games, Amusements** in **365/36** from pages **88 to 99**. Additional information related to relevant language or which help identify the informant have been added in some cases.

**XI, 4a GAMES, AMUSEMENTS. For original, See Chapter XI, pp. 110-119, 128-129.** The natives are without doubt a happy and laughter loving people, and in those coastal and inland areas where the supply of food is abundant and continuous, their evenings are generally given over to amusements of some kind.

With the boys, the amusements – all of which have an instructive tendency – consist of throwing pieces of stick or bark at each other, the missile being either parried with a small shield or by dodging. A rounded of bark will often be set rolling for the boys to aim at and tracks of birds and animals will be made in the sand, sometimes under the superintendence of an old man.

The boys are watched closely in their spear throwing games. The Southern groups did not use shields in battles. Dodging the spears became a fine art. Jabaitch excelled in spear dodging.

Mimic duels with toy or reed spears are fought, and in this manner the young people are early taught the methods of offence and defence. The various movements of those traditional dances which they are permitted to see are learned, particularly of bird and animal dances and the legendary songs of the tribe are unconsciously learned by them, for the average young native has a marvellously quick ear and a generally retentive memory for his own native songs and legends. The manufacture of string from fur, hair, fibre, spinifex; the preparation of gum; the extraction of kangaroo and opossum sinews, and above all, the "science" of tracking; all these are taught in so early a period of the child's life that their acquisition appears to be almost instinctive.



In all these instructive amusements the young people in every camp take part, and as time goes on the special talent which one or the other may develop in some direction, draws attention to their proficiency at a very early period, and they are encouraged by all in the special work in which they appear to be most skilled.

Continuing their practice in such speciality they will eventually become expert in their particular line and acquire the sort of fame throughout the tribes for the excellence for their manufacture of this or that article. Should one or more of the boys exhibit quickness and intelligence in mastering the movement of certain dances, they will not infrequently be allowed to take part in the real dance of their elders and very proud indeed are they when this privileged.<sup>36/88-89</sup>

- **Games [typescript]<sup>35/204</sup>**

The Southern natives had many games, athletic and otherwise. A kind of native hockey or Irish hurley (*Toordeet out* etc.) was played with a red gum nut for the ball, the stick being crooked by the action of fire, sides were taken and two natives started the nut, but there was no measured number of goals, the side that scored the most at the end of the game being declared the winner. They had another kind of game, called *meetch kambong* (nut game) played with a gum nut. The fire game, or *kala kambong*, consisted of a tall blackboy being set alight at the top, round its base the natives stationed themselves with small boughs and tried to break through the cordon and extinguish the fire. Both these led to a good deal of scrimmaging.<sup>35/204</sup>

Swimming races in the rivers and estuaries of the South were also held, women and men taking part in these. The women generally beat the men at these races. The women also vied with each other in tree climbing feats, climbing the highest trees in the South West with no other aid than their native hammer afforded; with this they cut a notch in the tree above their and then sticking the pointed end of one hammer into the bark, they raised themselves up by this means, their left hand clasping the tree, their toe in the notched hole.<sup>35/204-205</sup>

They are unrestrained except by their tribal laws and customs, easily pleased, but just as easily offended. In some camps you will find not one, but several Mrs. Gummidges, who cry on all and every occasion, who will wake you in the early dawn with their wailing, having perhaps suddenly remembered some of their relatives who had been dead for years, who are indeed perpetually doleful. In other camps a spirit of cheerfulness will obtain amongst the older women and laughter will be frequent. As a rule the natives are a merry, light-hearted people. They have songs for every occasion, and there are bards in every tribe. If a native is sad he sings, if revengeful, he sings; if glad, he sings; if combatively inclined, he sings of the circumstance. He witnesses a dog fight, and breaks into song. War, hunting, mourning, tribal and personal – there are songs for all theses.<sup>35/205</sup>

- **Games – typescript**

**Labelled 34/247 to 34/256 (pages headed – 110 to 119)**  
**Pages numbered 34/382 → same as above**

The natives are without doubt a happy and laughter loving people, and in those coastal

and inland areas where the supply of food is abundant and continuous their evenings were generally given over to amusements of some kind.<sup>34/247</sup>

With the boys, the amusements – all of which have an instructive tendency – consist in throwing pieces of stick or bark at each other, the missile being either parried with a small bark shield or dodging. A rounded disc of bark will often be sent rolling for the boys to aim at, and tracks of birds and other animals will be made in the sand, sometimes under the superintendence of an old man.<sup>34/247</sup>

Mimic duels with toy or reed spears are fought, and in this manner the young people are early taught the methods of offence and defence. The various movements of those traditional dances which they are permitted to see are learned, particularly of bird and animal dances, and the legendary songs of the tribe are unconsciously learned by them, for the average young native has a marvellously quick ear and a generally retentive memory for his own native songs and legends.<sup>34/247</sup>

The manufacture of string from fur, hair, fibre, Spinifex; the preparation of gum, the extraction of kangaroo and opossum sinews, and above all, the “science” of tracking, all these are taught in so early a period of the child’s life that their acquisition appears to be almost instinctive.<sup>34/247</sup>

In all these instructive amusements the young people in every camp take part, and as time goes on the special talent which one or the other may develop in some direction, draws attention to their proficiency at a very early period, and they are encouraged by all in the special work in which they appear to be most skilful.<sup>34/247</sup>

Continuing their practice in such speciality they will eventually become expert in their particular line, and acquire a sort of fame throughout the tribes for the excellence of their manufacture of this or that article. Should one or more of the boys exhibit the quickness and intelligence in mastering the movements of certain dances, they will not infrequently be allowed to take part in the real dance of elders, and very proud indeed are they when thus privileged.<sup>34/247-248</sup>

In the disc rolling game the disc was rolled by one of the players; about fifteen yards away from the throwers, the boy or young man who hits the disc taking the place of the bowler. “*Gool-gool*” (going-going) the bowler calls out as he starts the disc rolling. Accuracy of eye and speed in casting the spear were easily learned from the disc game.<sup>34/248</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Victorian natives played a similar game, which according to Mr. J.P.H. Mitchell was called “Kurrum-kurrum”. The disc game is common throughout the West.

All natives occupying the littoral were good swimmers, and before the advent of the whites many swimming races were held in the rivers and estuaries of the South and Southwest, also on the Northern coast. Men and woman took part in these swimming contests held in Southwestern estuaries and rivers, the women being generally the best swimmers.



### 34/265-66

Their games which in the South were called *Kombang* are of various kinds. I will mention two. *Boojur kombang* or ground game was played with a small *meetcha* or red gum nut. Which was buried in the ground about a foot in depth. The game consisted in a number of natives trying to obtain the nut while an equal number endeavoured to prevent them. The sport was continuous until the nut was secured or the natives got tired. This game was really a succession of "scrimmages" from start to finish.

Another game calling for both agility & muscle was the *Kala Kombang* or "fire game." A fire was lighted either on the ground or the top of a *balga* or *Xanthorrhoea*, the natives dividing themselves into two strong parties one side tried to put the fire completely out with short boughs while the other side defended it. The fire either burned to ashes or the natives quenched it which brought the game to conclusion. If the fire was in the blackboy top a high tree was chosen & up the attacking parties tried to climb being prevented by the defenders who pulled & pushed & scrimmaged as heartily as the most enthusiastic rugbyite could desire.

Cats cradle, guessing & many other games familiar to European children were played by the young aborigines all over the state & mimic battles with toy spears frequently took place amongst them. Duels were also fought & there were trials of skill with *kyley* & spear & kangaroo & emu hunts. The children taking turns of hunter and hunted.

These games were carried on the utmost good humour & fair play was characteristic of all of them. A foul stroke or unfair proceedings in any game was resented by the friends of both sides, but if an accident really happened which resulted in the death of a native no revenge was taken as the accident happened during a *Kombang*.

### 34/599

Those natives who occupied the coast-line of the south west were generally good swimmers & before the onset of the whites many swimming races were held in the rivers & estuaries of the South & South West. I also --- both men and women taking part in them. The women of the S.W. appear to have been the best swimmers.

There were also climbing contests in the big timber areas, the women taking the lead in this pastime also. The highest & broadest trees in the South West were climbed with no other aid than the native axe affords. They cut a notch in the tree above their heads & there sticking the pointed end of the axe into the bark they raised themselves up by this aid. Their left hand clasping the tree. Their great toe was ...

*Meetcha Tordeet* or *Owt* (Hockey) *Kambong*. A kind of native hockey or "hurley" called various names was played in the South West – a red gum nut (*meetcha*) being as the ball & a piece of wood.

*Meetcha Tordeet* or *Owt* (Hockey) *Kambong*. A kind of native hockey or "hurley" called various names was played in the South West – a red gum nut (*meetcha*) being as the ball & a piece of wood with a crooked root forming the hockey stick. The stick might be bent into shape with the aid of fire.

Sides were taken & two natives generally started with the *meetcha*, but there was no

regular number of goals, the side that scored the most at the end of the game declared the winners. The game was very (?) & not infrequently one or more deaths occurred in the course of the game broken limbs being quite usual happenings, occasionally too the temper of players, never greatly to be relied upon, broke out into fury over some little incident in the play, & had been before in sport not unusually ended in broken heads & limbs, in the death of one or more of the players.<sup>34/599</sup>

### 34/600

*Meetcha Kamong or boojoor-el-eeja*

This game was played by burying a gum nut some inches below the ground. Round the spot a number of natives ranged themselves, with their backs turned to the nut. An equal number was set off to dislodge them & gain possession of the nut & many a scrimmage ensued the

If the nut was captured, the attacking party became the defenders & so on until they tired of the game.

*Kala Kambong* (Fire Game) A tall blackboy (*Xanthorrhoea*) was set alight at the top & round its base a number of natives stood in order to prevent the fire from being put out by the opposing party who were armed with small gum boughs with which to quench the fire. Both this & the nut game gave great play to the muscles & lasted until both sides were wearied or until night fell, when the game might be resumed next day. Though fair play was a feature of all athletic games. No kicking was ever indulged in at these games.

This was *Jinnee ngaman billee billee dabbulgur* a trick game apparently played by the S.W. Natives but one which was not easily accomplished. A stick was placed flat on the ground. The performer clasping his buttocks, grasped both his great toes with his hands & jumped over the stick. Only long practice enabled this trick to be performed.

*Meeroo Meeroo* – string games were played by (?) A sort of “cats cradle” in which the vices were far more instructive than the European game

Guessing games were indulged in round the fires after the days hunting was over. Someone would say “No one can tell me what I saw today,” & the various answers provoked screams of merriment, the play not ceasing until “bedtime” set in. Many games of “make believe” were practised by the children the differences between the native the European game consisted only in the different surroundings or each. The Aboriginal child was limited to his or her familiar bush surroundings.<sup>34/600</sup>

### • Baby Play

Young girls had many games amongst themselves, as after a certain age they are not permitted to play with the boys of the camp. In one of their games a short piece of stick was placed on the ground to represent a baby, and the girl had to defend her child from the *wannas* (sticks) of the other girls, all of whom tried to kill the baby. *Wannas* were thrown from all sides at the young ‘mother,’ all of which she received on her own stick, held between her thumb and forefinger, putting it over her head, behind her back,

against her side, in whatever direction the missiles came, thus early learning to defend her young ones. At the real adult fights women sometimes stood beside their husbands and warded off the spears.<sup>36/95 (34/253)</sup> ... beating the *wanna* (digging stick) on the ground [at corroborees].<sup>36/108</sup>

### ▪ Ball Playing

It has been stated that ball playing was a sport of many of the Southern natives [W.A. in <sup>36/110</sup>] before the white settlement took place, the ball usually being made of opossum skin wound round or stitched with sinew or hair string. The player dropped the ball, and before it reached the ground he gave it a kick with the instep of his right foot, the other players rushing to catch it 'football fashion.'<sup>36/92, (34/251), 36/110</sup> [. . . one of the amusements of the girls and there is a kind of ball playing indulged in by them similar to that of the young men.<sup>36/108</sup>]

### ▪ Boomerang Throwing

*Kailee* (*kyley*, *kylies*, *kylees*, *kyley*) [all forms of spelling used are listed] throwing up into the air was another game. The *kailees* were propelled almost perpendicularly into the sky. The thrower [and the *nyngar*<sup>36/111</sup>] whose *kailee* remained longest in the rotary motion and flew the highest, won the game.<sup>36/93, 36/111</sup>

– **Language:** Come and play (with boomerangs) *Yan'gara lenjee*. [Beagle Bay]<sup>37/134</sup>

#### **see also:**

Withnell, John G. *The Customs and Traditions of the Aboriginal Natives of North Western Australia*. Hugh B. Guyer Printer, Roebourne, Western Australia, 1901.

### ▪ Bowling Game

The West Kimberley boys played games with a species of nut resembling a marble which they called *birrirr-birrirr baaloo*. *Jardagurra* or fishtraps, kangaroo traps, etc., were outlined with the *birrirr-birrirr* and the nuts were also rolled along the ground in a fashion somewhat similar to the game of bowls, except that there was no ball or marble to aim at.<sup>36/97 (34/254)</sup>

### ▪ Bush Game

The West Kimberley young men were very fond of playing a hunting game (kangaroo and emu hunts), one person representing the quarry, the others being the hunters. *Wallee ngnan weerup*, the game is called.<sup>36/116</sup> (Come and play a hunting game - *wallee ngnan weerup*. We'll play in the bush-*pindan yar'garrama*.<sup>37/278</sup>)

#### **A few sentences used by the players are given:**

*Pindan yangarrama* - We will play the bush game.

*Joon wanjoolboo* - You drive him.

*Nowloo goon weerup* - Hit with club.

*Joona joodoo joodoo wongoola* - You throw him down there.

*Booroo ngan dammajinna* - I missed him.

*Kai! kala! ngan barrin* - Hurra! I've got him.<sup>36/116</sup>

## ▪ Catching Hold of Emu Feathers

*Komba burrong* or *kambong burrong* - the game of 'catching hold' - was played by the Southwestern natives. Some feathers were tied tightly round one end of a stick, the other being stuck firmly into the ground. One native stood beside the stick and kept the others from taking the feathers [off the stick<sup>36/109</sup>]. No kicking was indulged in, but the natives were pushed away by the young man guarding the stick. They tried to get underneath his legs, beneath his arms, and in every way possible attempted to break his guard. The game continued until the feathers were pulled off or the natives tired. Baabor's games 36/109, 36/91

An amusement of the adults (according to Eyre) is a "large bunch of emu feathers tied together, which is held out and shaken as if in defiance, by some individual, whilst the others advance to try and take it out of his hands. This occasions an amusing struggle before the prize is gained, in which it is not uncommon to see from ten to twenty strong and lusty men rolling in a heap together (rather like a 'rigger' game). This is a sort of athletic exercise amongst them, for the purpose of testing each other's strength."<sup>36/114, 34/250</sup>

## ▪ Chasing butterflies

In the Vasse district the children played a game called *yon'gar* (butterflies) which was so called from children learning to hunt kangaroos by running down butterflies.<sup>37/148</sup>

## ▪ Children's Games

The children were in all respects like the white children, played their games together and had their mimic fights, played at pretending to cry, whining if they did not get what they wanted from their mothers, and so on.<sup>36/101</sup> [Note on page. Cornally, informant. Gascoyne district. Notebook 3b, p.82.]

The girls accompanied their mothers, root and seed gathering and all the children learned tracking and how to use their various weapons and implements, and so they continued until the boy was ready for the ceremonies which admitted him to manhood and the girl was allotted to her husband, but a camp of native children was in the merriment of play indulged in by the young natives the game as a family of white children, the girls imitated their mothers and the boys their fathers.<sup>36/101</sup>

## ▪ Climbing

There were also climbing contests in the big timber areas, the women taking the lead in this pastime also. The highest and broadest trees in the South-west were climbed with no other aid than their native axe afforded. They cut a notch in the tree above their heads, and then sticking the pointed end of the axe into the bark, they raised themselves up by its aid, their left hand clasping the tree. Their great toe was inserted in the holes thus made and in an incredibly short time they reached the top of the tree by this means. Many of the southern trees still bear the marks of climbers who have long since passed away.<sup>36/89</sup>

## ▪ Corroborees

Eyre says (Eyre's Disc. 226 et seq. II) "Another favourite amusement among the children is to practise the dances and songs of the adults, and a boy is very proud if he attains sufficient skill in these to be allowed to take part in the exhibition that are made before other tribes."<sup>36/113-114</sup>

Eyre, Edward John. *Journals of the Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia and Overland from Adelaide to King Georges Sound in the years 1840-1*. Vol. 1. T. and W. Boone, London, U.K., 1845.

The various movements of those traditional dances which they are permitted to see are learned, particularly of bird and animal dances and the legendary songs of the tribe are unconsciously learned by them, for the average young native has a marvellously quick ear and a generally retentive memory of his own native songs and legends.<sup>36/88</sup>

The following are the names given to some of the corroborees danced by Jubyché's people: Most of these are what is called *Bibber kog'ara wab'ber-ruk* (play making corroborees). *Beebal, Kog-ara, ka-ka-rah, jul-gytch, mir-dar, welp, moor-or-dung*.<sup>35/204</sup>

There is no serious business in life in which music has not its part. Mourning, rejoicing, inciting to battle, on all occasions music is the medium of expression for their feelings.

Native talent for improvising, amusements of children, practising the songs and dances of their elders. Mock combats. There are points of resemblance in all the dances, the only difference being in the accessories. The extraordinary quivering motion of the thigh, with legs distended.<sup>36/57</sup> [Dances, Ceremonies, Dress, etc. Sundry notes]

The Rev. J. Flood states that the corroborees of the New Norcia natives are not symbolical of anything. They are merely a form of sport or amusement and the refrains sung on corroboree occasions "are only for sound's sake, and the measuring of time."<sup>36/60</sup> [Early M.S.S.]

J. Whitchurch states that the Bussleton corroborees always took place in the evening and usually the day before a fight. These corroborees consisted of dancing in a circle round a fire, (the women being naked, the men almost so). The noise caused by the stamping of their feet could be heard hundreds of yards away. Then they sat down in sections with legs crossed, and beat the ground rhythmically with their sticks.<sup>35/206</sup>

### ● Selected information on Corroborees<sup>34/5-19</sup>

The word "corroboree" is the generally accepted term used by all European writers when describing the various dances, ceremonies, songs, etc., of the Australian aborigines, any native "social gathering" being included in the general term.

The word was doubtless derived from the tribes first met with at Port Jackson in the early settlement of New South Wales, and the Rev. Dr. Fraser gives a definition of the term in his pamphlet on the Aborigines of N.S. Wales. The word is now used all over Australia, notwithstanding its prescribed habitat, and even the natives themselves, at least those of them who have come into any contact with white people, use the soft sounding word, which is so easy of pronunciation.<sup>34/5</sup>

Fraser, John. "The Aborigines of New South Wales." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales* 16 (1883): 192-233.

The aborigines love their dances and ceremonies, not only for the opportunity they afford for the gratification of personal vanity in the display of their decorated persons, but also in a great measure because of their light hearted joyous disposition which takes refuge in song and dance on every possible occasion. War dances, before and after battle, local dances shown by the various tribes to each other on the occasion of a large assemblage, gathered together for some ceremony, animal and bird dances, in which the habits, manners, etc., of birds or animal are faithfully imitated, dream dances and many other kinds are indulged in at all times and seasons, and entered into with a zest that never wearies.<sup>34/5-6</sup>

The dances of the Southwestern people, the older remnant of the earlier aborigines, were exceedingly primitive, mainly imitating the birds and animals of their respective districts.<sup>34/13</sup>

A local dance amongst the Southern people represented the hunting of the *tammar* (a species of wallaby) into the *bonjer* (swamps), the "*ngoong'ar baaming dowuk*" – natives beating their clubs together to frighten and confuse the tammar and compel them to head towards the *bonjer*, and the great gathering and feasting after the battue.

The *Nyeerimba kening* of the Canning and Murray district natives is a dance imitating the movements, etc., of the *Nyeerimba* (pelican), the two leaders of the dance wearing the masks of the pelican. The habits and motions of the bird are represented exactly, also the manner in which it is stalked or hunted in the swamps, estuaries or lakes which are its favourite feeding grounds.

In the emu dance of the Bunbury and Busselton natives, the long stately stride of the bird was imitated most wonderfully, the left hand and arm being raised above the head and slightly crooked to represent the head and neck of the bird. As the performers dance with the high knee action, the arm and hand are moved as the bird moves its head when walking. A second act shows the feeding, "love making", chasing and final capture of the bird.

The emu and kangaroo dances were amongst the *Bibbuluk kening* (Bibbul people's dances) and were performed at the Vasse, Augusta, Bunbury, Murray and Swan districts, and probably further north and east.

All the larger animal and bird dances dealt with the chasing and killing of the animal represented, as well as with their habits, etc. In the kangaroo dance the performers stood in a semi-circle while two of their number, representing the kangaroo and the hunter, detached themselves from the group and while one assumed the attitude of the animal when feeding, raising at intervals to gaze about for possible enemies, standing absolutely motionless in the exact attitude the kangaroo adopts, and then stooping down to graze, the other native - the hunter - creeps cautiously towards his quarry against the wind, changing his position as the animal turns hither and thither while feeding. He moves backwards and forwards, throws himself on the ground, and acts in



every detail as though he was chasing the real animal. Eventually he closes in upon it, lifts his spear and sends it hurling close beside the animal which immediately falls.

During the performance the remaining members stand perfectly still, watching the game intently. When the scene is ended, two more take the place of kangaroo and hunter and the game proceeds. As no two natives hunt alike, the methods of each are noted by spectators and performers, in order that some fresh hint may be taken in the mode of kangaroo "stalking", called *yongar ngardongin* by the Vasse district people.

Moonlight nights are chosen for this kind of pastime, but the central fire also casts its light upon the players. There may or may not be musicians and singers for these displays, but the songs are not allusive, and the music is merely played for the rhythm and measure of the movements.

In the Eucla district a local dance was performed by both men and women, and consisted principally in quivering the limbs and knocking the knees together at intervals. The women did not touch the men in the progress of the dance, each sex forming a separate circle. The men either carried a club or spear which they waved or raised at certain stages of the dance, or their hands were left free. The women held their digging sticks either horizontally, over their heads, or waved them with their right hands. When the quivering of the lower muscles took place, the performers generally leant upon a club or *meero* but when a dancer became proficient in muscle quivering he dispensed with support, and the quivering was kept up until the performer became exhausted. Only the younger women took part in these dances, all of which had licentious tendencies. In moving round the outer circle the women shuffled along, scarcely lifting their feet off the ground, but quivering their limbs and knocking their knees together while they glided around the circle.<sup>34/15-17</sup>

A dance for amusement only was called *ken wab'* or *ken-a-wab* (dance play) in the Esperance, Bremer Bay and Korrlup districts, the songs of which were *mai won'gan'yee* (voice talking).<sup>34/17</sup>

According to Joowal, a Bremer Bay district native, dances used to be held "long time ago" by Ballarruk men who imitated the movements of the *ballarr*, or *ballaur*, "a kind of lizard that walks about the sea", from which the name Ballarruk was derived.<sup>34/19</sup>

## ▪ Daily Life and Amusements

There is no serious business in life in which music has not its part. Mourning, rejoicing, inciting to battle, on all occasions music is the medium of expression for their feelings. Evening amusements, making animals' tracks, trundling discs to be speared at, throwing clubs at each other. They impress footprints with their fingers, using little sticks to finish off with. All natives are fond of imitating the habits of animals.

Native talent for improvising, amusements of children, practising the songs and dances of their elders. Mock combats. There are points of resemblance in all the dances, the only difference being in the accessories. The extraordinary quivering motion of the thigh, with legs distended.<sup>36/57</sup> [Dances, Ceremonies, Dress, etc. Sundry notes]

The natives of *West Kimberly* have numerous dances, initiation, children's dances, dream dances, imported dances, and many others. Their songs, too, are many and varied, and are composed upon any and every subject. Dream songs accompany the dream dances, and dream songs without dances are also sung.

### ▪ Dances and Songs

Another favorite amusement among the children is to practice the dances and songs of the adults, and a boy is very proud if he attains sufficient skill in these to be allowed to take part in the exhibitions that are made before other tribes.

**DANCES, etc.**<sup>34/5</sup> In the Eucla district a local dance was performed by both men and women, and consisted principally in quivering the limbs and knocking the knees together at intervals. The women did not touch the men in the progress of the dance, each sex forming a separate circle. The men either carried a club or spear which they waved or raised at certain stages of the dance, or their hands were left free. The women held their digging sticks either horizontally, over their heads, or waved them with their right hands. When the quivering of the lower muscles took place, the performers generally leant upon a club or *meero* but when a dancer became proficient in muscle quivering he dispensed with support, and the quivering was kept up until the performer became exhausted. Only the younger women took part in these dances, all of which had licentious tendencies. In moving round the outer circle the women shuffled along, scarcely lifting their feet off the ground, but quivering their limbs and knocking their knees together while they glided around the circle.<sup>34/15-17</sup>

### • Children's Dance

*Booga nooloo* - Children's dance.

*Tchambar womba wear wannadiddoo* (ring) on forehead and neck.  
The *biljar* is a bough shelter. All face west (*kularra*).

*Ngindaa'ra r raa'*  
*Eej a' ma ra wongainya.*

The boys sing this song and are joined by the men.  
Then they sing:-

*Mallaree indee maara*  
*Koongag nalaanja.*

Then the men beats with the *nowloo*, as he beats it whistling *wisht, wisht, wisht*, and all the boys who are dancing and all bearing *weerrgin* (small boughs) hold these in their hands and going round the *biljar* they beat them under each arm, crying *wisht wisht wisht*. The *nowloos* are beaten, and as they are beating the *nowloos* they all sing:-

*Wallaa wallaa njoolamaara*  
*Bandaaral ubanjaara nyoolamaara nyoola*<sup>35/n.p.</sup>



### • Dance and Song

The various movements of those traditional dances which they are permitted to see are learned, particularly of bird and animal dances and the legendary songs of the tribe are unconsciously learned by them, for the average young native has a marvellously quick ear and a generally retentive memory for his own native songs and legends.

#### - Children's hunting song

##### ***Waugul and "spirit kangaroo" song.***

Song of the *Waugul* (snake) and spirit kangaroo (*magü*) who punished the boys for skinning and eating young mice, pretending they were kangaroos. The incident happened at Dowingerup. The *waugul* and kangaroo are singing their own praises:

*Dow/ingerup gā Dow/ingerup gā*  
*Waugululla be'in'eree kaan'gana gā*  
*Kaanganup waug'ululla bag'in'er'ee gā*  
*Dowingerup gā*<sup>36/66</sup>

### • Dance for Girls

The young Bibbulmun girls frequently amused themselves with dancing along in a kind of half glide, half shuffle, with hands either raised above their heads, or holding short wannas. The men of their tribe imitated their movements occasionally, and sang the following song as they tried to shuffle like the girls:-

*Mandeegur koojal Beebul woonanga,*  
*Yaan ee yanman yaan ee yanman yaan ee yanman, yaan ee yanman yaan.*

"Two Bibbulmun girls dance this way, that way, this way, that way." <sup>34/38</sup>

The natives of West Kimberly have numerous dances, initiation, children's dances, dream dances, imported dances, and many others. Their songs, too, are many and varied, and are composed upon any and every subject. Dream songs accompany the dream dances, and dream songs without dances are also sung. <sup>34/96</sup>

### • Dance Game<sup>34/16</sup>

The emu and kangaroo dances were amongst the *Bibbuluk kening* (Bibbul people's dances) and were performed at the Vasse, Augusta, Bunbury, Murray and Swan districts, and probably further north and east.

All the larger animal and bird dances dealt with the chasing and killing of the animal represented, as well as with their habits, etc. In the kangaroo dance the performers stood in a semi-circle while two of their number, representing the kangaroo and the hunter, detached themselves from the group and while one assumed the attitude of the animal when feeding, raising at intervals to gaze about for possible enemies, standing absolutely motionless in the exact attitude the kangaroo adopts, and then stooping down to graze, the other native - the hunter - creeps cautiously towards his quarry against the wind, changing his position as the animal turns hither and thither while feeding. He moves backwards and forwards, throws himself on the ground, and acts in

every detail as though he was chasing the real animal. Eventually he closes in upon it, lifts his spear and sends it hurling close beside the animal which immediately falls.

• **Dancing, Singing and Thigh Quivering.** (From early MSS. – a collection of notes, some of which occur in XI, 4a.)<sup>36/108, 36/107</sup>

Dancing singly or in groups forms one of the amusements of the girls and there is a kind of ball playing indulged in by them similar to that of the young men. They were also very fond of making the fleshy part of their thighs quiver and shake for quite ten minutes at a time, those who could keep up the quivering longest being considered the winners.<sup>36/108</sup>

Young girls learn the songs and music of all the dances which they are permitted to see, as women may in all these dances supply the vocal and instrumental music. They may sometimes be assisted or led by one or two old men, but in general, the women furnish the music of ordinary dances. Thus the young girls master the air and words of the songs of certain dances from the elders, and when they have reached womanhood and marriage, are ranked amongst the professional female singers. They learn time easily, almost instinctively and will master both the time and tune of English, French or German songs in an incredibly short period.

They must also learn handclapping, beating the *wanna* (digging stick) on ground or on *meero*, or playing with the closed fist on the rolled kangaroo skin, before they can become members of the female orchestra.

As a rule the very old women rarely sing or dance, being content to watch and criticise the performances of the younger people.<sup>36/108</sup>

### • **Girls Dancing**

Dancing singly or in groups forms another amusement of the young girls, also imitating the songs and music and dancing of those performances they are permitted to see. They were also very fond of practising thigh quivering, clasping their hands behind their heads while making their limb muscles quiver and shake, one little performer keeping up the quivering for several minutes. In this manner they master the songs and dances of their people in which they will assist in later years.<sup>36/95</sup> [From Early MSS. – a collection of notes, some of which occur in XI, 4 a]

### • **Sea mullet dance**<sup>34/27-28</sup>

“When the red gum was in blossom” a *kalda kaaning* (sea mullet dance) was performed by the Vasse and Capel natives. This dance was in a sense totemic, as its object appeared to be the increase of the sea mullet (*kaldal*) and salmon (*me'lok*). It can however, scarcely be called ‘dancing’ as the performers were seated throughout the progress of the song and accompanying movements. It took place at the beginning of the spawning season, when a *Beedawa*, *Jalgoo* or other large ceremony had been arranged, and a large gathering expected. At certain times in the year the rivers and estuaries of the Southwestern districts swarm with sea mullet and salmon which come in for spawning, and great assemblages coincided with this period. Only *kalda* and *me'lok borungur* took part in the *kaalda kaaning*.

The evening before the gathering of the fish from the weirs (which had been prepared in readiness for shoal) the elders among the performers obtained a ngoojook (a species of interwoven wire grass used as a "net," also used in the construction of the weirs) which they placed on the ground and all those whose oobarree (totem) the kalda and melok were, sat round the ngoonjook and sang for the fish. They "called the demma goomber (great grandparent) who sat on the Capel hill to come and help them catch many kalda and melok." Sometimes one or other of these fish had been caught and this was laid on the ngoojook and stroked and "fondled" during the singing which lasted throughout the night. The singing was accompanied with all the motions the fish made when spawning, shoaling, feeding, etc., the mimicry of these forming the dance.

The song was continuous and almost entirely recitative. As they sang, the singers related that "when the fish came into the estuaries and rivers, me'lok and kalda wanted to hide under the water so that they should not be seen, and they called out 'gabba, gabba, gabba (water, water, water)', and tried to get under the waves.

### ▪ Disc game

A rounded disc of bark will often be set rolling for the boys to aim at and tracks of birds and animals will be made in the sand, sometimes under the superintendence of an old man.<sup>36/88</sup>

In the disc-rolling game the disc was rolled by one of the players, about fifteen yards away from the throwers, the boy or young man who succeeded in piercing the disc taking the place of the bowler. *Gool-gool* (going-going) the bowler calls out as he starts the disc rolling. Accuracy of eye and speed in casting the spear were easily learned from the disc game.

It is interesting to note that the Victorian natives played a similar game, which according to Mr. J.P.H. Mitchell was called *kurrum-kurrum*. The disc game is common throughout the West.<sup>36/89</sup>

### ▪ Emu Feather Game

An amusement of the adults (according to Eyre) is

"a large bunch of emu feathers tied together, which is held out and shaken as if in defiance, by some individual, whilst the others advance to try and take it out of his hands. This occasions an amusing struggle before the prize is gained, in which it is not uncommon to see from ten to twenty strong and lusty men rolling in a heap together (rather like a 'rugby' game). This is a sort of athletic exercise amongst them, for the purpose of testing each other's strength."

Eyre, Edward John. *Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia and Overland From Adelaide to King George's Sound in the years 1840-1*. Vol. 2. Manners and Customs of the Aborigines of Australia. Australiana Facsimile Editions. Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, S.A., 1964 [1845].

## ▪ Finding articles

The game of covering up articles and seeking for them was called *Ngabbung eeja narnung*, in the Southern areas.<sup>37/40</sup>

## ▪ Finger Cracking

The old game of telling the number of one's sweethearts by cracking the fingers has been known to the Perth natives since before the white men came.<sup>36/105</sup>

## ▪ Fire Game with Boomerangs

In the West Kimberley district [E of Peak Hill], a game called *Kumbaldhanoo kallongoo* was played at night with a lighted *lanju* or *kylie* (*kailee*, *kylee* or *kyley* - boomerang) by the boys and young men who would stand certain distances apart. One end of the *lanju* was set alight and they were thrown up in the air where they would remain circling round and round for several minutes without coming to the ground. The end burned while the *lanju* remained in the air, the motion of the weapon fanning the flame. The highest weapon and the longest in rotary motion won. A very dark night was chosen for this game, which might be termed a species of 'native fireworks'.<sup>36/93,36/103</sup>

The *kylies* were thrown straight forwards, and after going some distance (without touching the ground at all), they rose up in the air, each *kylie* performing its own circular motion without coming into contact with any of the others. All of them were whirling in the air at the same time. Even when their force was spent and they fell to the ground they did not clash, but came quietly down within a little distance of each other. As soon as they alighted they were again and again thrown up by the boys, the game lasted sometimes for hours. The spectacle of these lighted sticks whirling round and round in the darkness must have been very curious.<sup>36/103</sup>

The two varieties of *kylies* used by the Gascoyne, Ashburton and most of the natives of the Nor-West are the light *kylie* mentioned above, called *walanu*, which, when thrown, does not touch the ground in its flight and the *thoora-bandee* or *wit-ba*, another and a heavier *kylie* which always touches the ground in its flight first and which is used to kill ground game.<sup>36/103-104</sup>

The light *kylie* is generally used in a fight after a corroboree and such is the swiftness and force with which it is thrown that Cornally [informant] has frequently seen natives instantly killed by one of these weapons.

## ▪ Fire Game

*Kal boming* (fire hitting). This game was played in the Southern districts and called for both agility and strength.<sup>36/91, 36/100</sup>

A fire was lighted either on the ground or the top of a balga or *xanthorrhoea* (blackboy), and the natives dividing themselves into two strong parties, one side tried to put the fire completely out with short boughs while the other side defended it. The fire either burned to ashes, or the natives quenched it, which brought the game to an end. When they had been successful in quenching the fire, they took their turn in guarding a fire, and so on until both sides were wearied or until night fell. If the fire was in the blackboy top, a high

tree was chosen and up this the attacking party tried to climb, being prevented by the defenders, who pulled and pushed and scrimmaged as heartily as the most enthusiastic 'rugbyite' could desire. This game gave great play to the muscles. Sides for this game would generally be formed with four or five on each side.<sup>36/110-111</sup>

[A black boy top was set alight, and then sides would be formed of 4 or 5 each, the game was for one side to put the fire out, while the other side prevented them.<sup>36/110</sup>]

• **Kal boming (fire hitting)** was played in the Southern districts. A blackboy tree, one of the tall species, was lighted at the top, and a number of natives forming themselves into a cordon, prevented an equal number who held small boughs in the hands, from beating out the fire. When they had been successful in quenching it, they took their turn in guarding it, and so on until they tired of the game.<sup>36/91</sup>

#### - **Manja boming Song**<sup>36/67</sup>

This song is sung when making "babbin", "koobong" or "friend" at Manja boming time (manja = fire stick, boming = hitting or striking.)

When the native made a woman his "babbin", he first brought a firestick which he exchanged with her, taking one from her in return. He then tied a cockatoo's feather to the point of his spear and going behind his yoga babbin he rested the spear first on her right shoulder then on her left, singing. The song refers to the babbin-making and mentions the gifts prepared for the babbin.

#### ▪ **Firestick Game**

The game of passing a lighted stick from one to another is played by the young natives, also putting a small lighted stick in their mouths, similar games being played by European children.<sup>36/103</sup>

#### ▪ **Firestick Twirling**

Girls have also a game played with a lighted firestick, similar to the European game. A firestick is taken and twirled round and round, the player calling out the names of all the fish she can think of until the light goes out.<sup>36/95, 34/253</sup>

#### ▪ **Guessing Games**

The Injibandis have many guessing games.<sup>36/109</sup> *Wabbagunja, kambong, wabbyn, ngabbungee jenarnung, kambugenjin* (or *kam'boo gen'jin* in the Wonnerup district.<sup>37/159</sup>) are some of the names used for guessing games.<sup>[36/94 From marginal note in VI (Early MSS, Religion etc.)]</sup>

The Injibandis have many guessing games in their camps at night. For instance, a young man who has been away all day on a hunting expedition will begin by saying, "I saw something today, very funny, no one can tell me what it was." Then the guessing goes on amidst roars of laughter. This is a game very similar to the "animal vegetable & mineral" game common amongst white people.

Guessing games were often indulged in around the camp fire after the day's hunting was over. [The *Injibandis* have many guessing games in their camps at night.<sup>36/109, (36/228 - handwritten notes)] A young man who has been away all day on a hunting expedition will begin by saying, "I saw something today, very funny, no one can tell what it was." Then the guessing goes on amidst roars of laughter, the game not ceasing until 'bedtime' has set in. This is a game very similar to the 'Animal, vegetable and mineral' game common amongst white people.<sup>36/109</sup> Women might also play these guessing games amongst themselves, on their return from a root-gathering expedition.<sup>36/94, 34/252, 36/94, (details from Baabur's games 36/109), 36/228 - handwritten notes</sup></sup>

#### • Hide and Seek

In playing this, the seeker calls out, *kommi* and looks, and when the 'hider' is discovered, or comes herself from her hiding place, she calls out, "*Katta korgor*" (head - *katta*). [Nandari and Bomilya played this game.]<sup>36/117</sup> A game somewhat similar to 'hide and seek' Kabber nyeerage [Wonnerup]<sup>37/159</sup>

Amongst the Roebourne district children a game was played somewhat resembling 'hide and seek', a whistle being the signal to commence the search.<sup>36/111</sup> Another version, called *kamban* was played by the Gingin natives. (*Kambaning* - sending a young man away to hide and then looking for him). When they found him, they shouted, "*Kamban, kamban, ah Woolber*"

Woolber, informant Ngabong = games.<sup>36/109, 36/91</sup>

#### • Hiding Object Game

Very young boys played *jalingangooro womba* (sorcerers) by putting on of these marbles (*birrirr'-birrirr* nut) or any small object into their mouths and pretending to swallow it. They then take it out of their ear, nose or some other part of their body, or take it out of the stomach of a make-believe patient. In the Gascoyne district the object is taken out of their ears or throat or nose, or any part of their heads or faces except their mouths. This is a game very common amongst European children.<sup>36/97, 36/102 [Cornally, informant Gascoyne district].</sup>



## • Hockey

A kind of native hockey was played in the South (of Western Australia) long before the whites. The game more nearly resembled the Irish 'hurley' than hockey as it is now played. [It resembles closely the Southern Irish game of 'hurley' and like that game, the natives *meetcha booma* always ended in a general fight with the sticks.<sup>36/90</sup>]

This game was called by various dialectic names: *Meetcha boma* (nut striking),<sup>36/113</sup> *bandee wab'* (hockey), *wabba meeja* ('ball' *meeja* - gum nut)<sup>37/159</sup> - Perth; *meetcha toordeet*, *owt kambong* (owt game or play) - Fremantle, Rockingham; *booloolul wabbin* (playing hockey) - Albany; *nandap toordeet and owt* - Murray (red gum nut and hockey stick), are some of the native equivalents for the game of hockey. In the York district *deedagurt* is the name for native hockey, played with a *meetcha* (red gum nut) and *bandeegurt* (crooked stick).<sup>36/113</sup> In the Pinjarra hockey (native) was called *bandap toordeet* or *deedagurt*.<sup>37/159</sup>

A *meeja* or *meetcha* (red gum nut) was used as the ball and a piece of wood with a crooked root (*bandeegurt*) formed the hockey stick. The stick was generally bent into shape with the aid of fire. A line was drawn across the playing ground, a *meetcha* being placed in the middle of the line, which was simply made by scratching the stick across the ground.

The natives divided themselves into two parties of about 20 men and women in each side. In many places an unlimited number of players might take sides, but whether the numbers on each side were equal was not discovered. [A certain number of natives took sides in the game, two of their number started the nut ...<sup>36/90</sup>] Two natives started the *meeja* and then the others on each side joined in and tried to make as many 'goals' as possible during the course of the game.

The goals were certain spots at either end of the ground, arranged beforehand by the players. Sometimes a ring was marked as a goal at either end if nothing special could be observed in the place chosen. [Rings were made at either end of a piece of cleared ground and the natives divided themselves into two parties.<sup>36/112</sup>] The goals were marked off on one side or another of a tree and whichever group had the most marks on the tree were declared the winners when the game ended.

The game was often played from almost sunrise to the late afternoon and resumed again next day.

There were no regular number of goals, nor did there appear to be any 'forwards' in the game. The game was an exceedingly rough one, and not infrequently one or more deaths occurred during its progress, while broken limbs were quite usual happenings. Occasionally too, the temper of the players, never greatly to be relied upon, broke into fury over some small incident in the play and not unusually the game ended in broken heads and one or more fatalities.<sup>36/90, (34/249)</sup>

Barreegup, near Mandurah, three miles east of Mandura, was a famous playing ground, and the fishing season in *jilba* (spring time) was the time chosen to play a big game, as all the natives from all the outlying tribes were then assembled.<sup>36/112</sup>

Mr. L.P. Hall states that the Hay district natives, when assembled for a corroboree which

drew great numbers of tribes together, played during the day a game similar to hockey, curved sticks and a gum nut being the implements used. At these large gatherings, very little time was spent in seeking or preparing food. Exchange or barter was also carried on at these corroborees.<sup>36/112-113, 36/90</sup>

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#### • Hitting Game

They played a game with a long stick, in the old fashion of French and English.<sup>35/204</sup>

[From the brief outline of the game presented here and after a comparison with different descriptions of the game of French and English it appears that the game consisted of using a stick to hit an object back and forth between two teams. The teams were usually a set distance apart and players attempted to either hit the opposing players with the object and/or hit the object past a line behind the opposing team.]

#### • Humour

Mrs. Millet in her book *An Australian Parsonage*, pp.82-3, tells an amusing story of a native man and woman whom she commissioned to carry a letter to a parishioner who lived eleven miles from the parsonage (York).

Millett, Mrs. Edward. *An Australian Parsonage: or, The Settler and the Savage in Western Australia*. E. Stanford, London, 1872.

“Ned was dressed very jauntily in nothing but a shirt drawn tightly to the waist with a belt, whereas his wife’s attire might rather have befitted an expedition to the South Pole. She was quite weighed down with a garment of new opossum fur....and her spirits seemed as heavy as her clothing. The next day we had a thunderstorm, with pouring rain which lasted till the evening, when just after dark there came a tap at the window,



accompanied with a very lamentable voice, which I recognised as belonging to Ned. He and his wife had brought me back an answer...in spite of the bad weather....Ned had exchanged clothes with her when weather had changed, by which I do mean that he had given her his shirt, but rather that he had taken her fur. Being invited into the kitchen they forthwith sat down upon hearth in front of the fire, and some pepper having been accidentally mixed with the tea which our servant made for them, Ned seized the occasion to raise his wife's spirits by feigning death in consequence. That such an event should be regarded by her with complacency, after his recent behaviors about the fur, was possibly a suggestion of his own conscience, and accordingly he fell back in a good stage attitude crying out, "Pepper tea; I die, I poison". On this the poor half-drowned wife burst out into a laugh, which was echoed by the defunct and the two immediately became as merry as a couple of children.

### ▪ **Jumping Game**

The game of *jinnee ngaman billee billee dabbulgar* consisted in placing a stick horizontally upon the ground, the player squatting beside it, catching hold of his two great toes while still squatting and then jumping over the stick, a feat the difficulty of which is understood only when an attempt is made to perform it. This game was played by the Capel district natives.<sup>36/92, (Baabur's games 36/109)</sup>

Only long practice enabled this trick to be performed.

[A clever game, or trick was that of trying to jump over a stick laid on the ground while holding your toes with your hands.<sup>36/238 – handwritten notes., 36/111</sup>

### ▪ **Language of Play**

Just for fun *Yeeboo ngandoonyoo* (Broome District)

Children talking and playing *Derrup wan-gerung no'bil'yung wab'* (Williams)

My children can play with him *Nganna Koolongur wabbain bal* (Gingin)

Playing together *Donja wabbain, Koolonga wabbain* (Pinjarra)

Playing *Eedurt-eedurt* (Pinjarra)

There playing are the children *Bo'kul wabberding koolongur* (Perth)

Playing together *donja wabbain, koolonga wabbain* [Pinjarra]

Playing *eedurt-eedurt*

Playing *wab'bong'in* [York]<sup>37/500</sup>

My children can play with him *Nganna koolongur wabbain bal* [Gingin]<sup>37/164</sup>

There playing are the children *Bo'kul wabberding koolongur* [Perth]<sup>37/172</sup>

Just for fun *yeebo ngandoonyoo* [Broome district]<sup>37/275</sup>

There playing are the children *bo'kul wabbarding koolong'ur* [Perth]<sup>37/315</sup>

We play like kangaroos *ngalla yon'gar yon'gar wabba*.<sup>37/392</sup>

Children talking and playing *Derrup wan-gerung no'bil'yung wab'* [Williams]<sup>37/n.p.</sup>

• **Language related to play [typescript list]**

The information presented in this section represents a re-organisation of the section on **Games, Amusements** in **365/37** from pages 40 to 500. Additional information related to relevant language or which help identify the informant have been added in some cases.

*ngabbung eeja narnung* (the game of covering up articles and seeking for them),  
**South.**<sup>37/40</sup>

**Beagle Bay**

Come and play (with boomerangs) *Yan'gara lenjee* <sup>37/134</sup>

*Yon'gar* Male kangaroo (**Swan, Vasse, etc.**)

Butterflies (so called from children learning to hunting kangaroo by running down butterflies) **Vasse.**<sup>37/148</sup>

**Wonnerup**

Game somewhat similar to "hide and seek"

*Kabber nyeerago* <sup>37/159</sup>

Giving a "make-believe" feast

*Beejar, eeja, beejar abbin, kala*

*koogurning, kala jalaburn. Gingin* <sup>37/159</sup>

**Wonnerup**

Guessing game

*Kam'boo gen'jin* <sup>37/159</sup>

**Pinjarra**

Hockey (native)

*Bandap toordeet, deedagurt* <sup>37/159</sup>

**Perth**

Hockey

*Bandee wab', wabba meeja*  
("ball" meeja – gum nut)

**Gingin**

My children can play with him

*Nganna koolongur wabbain bal* <sup>37/164</sup>  
[nana kulongar wabain bal  
my children play (with) him]

Putting (meat) on "bough plates"

*Neen jug'urn* <sup>37/167</sup>

**Northhampton**

Run and jump

*Ngar'ran'ga warra thoo'runga* <sup>37/167</sup>

**Wonnerup**

Swimming races in the estuaries and rivers

*Kow'in'yung ngeerig* <sup>37/170</sup>

**Beverly and York**

Twirling round and round in the dance

*Bal'eeke bal'eeke' ge'ning* <sup>37/172</sup>

**Perth**

There playing are the children

*Bo'kul wabberding koolongur* <sup>37/172, 37/315</sup>

**Broome District**

Just for fun

*yeeboo ngandoonyoo* <sup>37/275</sup>

Come and play a hunting game

*wallee ngan weerup* <sup>37/122, 37/278</sup>

We'll play in the bush

*pindan yan'garrama* <sup>37/122, 37/278</sup>

**Vasse**

Dodging or avoidingspears etc.

*darn' da-burning* <sup>37/301</sup>

**Williams**

Dodging spears

*kwel' gurning* <sup>37/301</sup>**Swan District**

We play like kangaroos

*ngalla yon'gar yon'gar wabba* <sup>37/392</sup>  
[We kangaroo kangaroo play]**Broome**

I can swim

*ngai kallooree kan'gina* <sup>37/454</sup>**Pinjarra**

Playing together

*donja wabbain, koolonga wabbain* <sup>37/500</sup>

Playing

*eedurt-eedurt* <sup>37/500</sup>**York**

Playing

*wab'bong'in* <sup>37/500</sup>**Williams**

Children talking and playing

*Derrup wan-gerung no'bil'yung wab'* <sup>37/n.p.</sup>

- **Bates 365/36/67**

Ngabbung eeja narnung (the game of covering up articles and seeking for them), South

Come and play a hunting game Wallee ngan weerup

We'll play in the bush Pindan yar'garrama

Come and play (with boomerangs) Yan'gara lenjee

Yon'gar Butterflies (so called from children learning to hunt kangaroo by running down butterflies) Vasse

Game somewhat similar to "hide and seek" Kabber nyeerage [Wonnerup]

Giving a "make-believe" feast Beejar eeja, beejar abbin, kala koogurning, kala jalaburn Gingin. [Wonnerup]

Guessing game Kam'boo gen'jin [Wonnerup]

Hockey (native) Bandap toordeet, deedagurt [Pinjarra]

Hockey Bandee wab', wabba meeja ("ball" meeja - gum nut) [Pinjarra]

My children can play with him Nganna koolongur wabbain bal [Gingin] (155)

Putting (meat) on "bough plates" Neen jug'urn [Gingin] (158)

Swimming races in the estuaries and rivers Kow'in'yung ngeerig [Wonnerup] (161)

There playing are the children Bo'kul wabberding koolongur [Perth] (163)

Just for fun yeebo ngandoonyoo [Broome district] (

Come and play a hunting game wallee ngan weerup

We'll play in the bush pindan yan'garrama

Dodging or avoiding spears, kailees etc. darn'naburn [Vasse]

Dodging spears kwel' gurning [Williams]

There playing are the children bo'kul wabbarding koolong'ur [Perth]

We play like kangaroos ngalla yon'gar yon'gar wabba.

I can swim ngai kallooree kan'gina

## • 37/500

Playing together donja wabbain, koolonga wabbain [Pinjarra]

Playing eedurt-eedurt

Playing wab'bong'in [York]

Fire Game with boomerangs Kumbaldhanoo kallongoo [E of Peak Hill]

Children talking and playing Derrup wan-gerung no'bil'yung wab' [Williams]

### ▪ Learning

The manufacture of string from fur, hair, fibre, spinifex: the preparation of gum; the extraction of kangaroo and opossum sinews, and above all, the 'science' of tracking; all these are taught in so early a period of the child's life that their acquisition appears to be almost instinctive.<sup>36/88</sup>

In all these instructive amusements the young people in every camp take part, and as time goes on the special talent which one or the other may develop in some direction, draws attention to their proficiency at a very early period, and they are encouraged by all in the special work in which they appear to be most skilled.<sup>36/88</sup>

Continuing their practice in such speciality they will eventually become expert in their particular line and acquire a sort of fame throughout the tribes for the excellence of their manufacture of this or that article. Should one or more of the boys exhibit quickness and intelligence in mastering the movements of certain dances, they will not infrequently be allowed to take part in the real dance of their elders and very proud indeed are they when thus privileged.<sup>36/88-89</sup>

### ▪ Make Believe

Many games of 'make believe' were practised by the children, the difference between their games and the European game consisting only in the different surroundings of each. The aboriginal child was limited to his or her familiar bush surroundings.<sup>36/94, 34/252</sup>

### ▪ Making Faces

Making evil faces, just as the European children do, is a common game with the natives.<sup>36/102</sup>

### ▪ Memory

The quickness with which the natives grasp white people's songs and games is amazing. Cornally [informant] says that often when travelling through the bush he heard Irish songs sung by what he thought were white men - "Oh, Molly Reilly, I love you", and such others, and thinking was a camp of white men in the vicinity he would hasten his steps only to find a camp of natives all singing this or some other song with all their might.

### ▪ Mimicry

Their talent for mimicry is indicative of very keen powers of observation. They will repeat with the greatest accuracy a conversation between two white people, not one word of

which they understand. Words beginning with f, s, v, z, or containing these letters, are expected, as these sounds are not represented in any native dialect known to me. [I found a faint s sound in the Broome dialect, gthā'mu- g ... this s was very faint ... (handwritten notes)] Otherwise the natives will repeat exactly the conversation of white men, and any little peculiarity of speech or gait in the speakers will at once be observed and reproduced, so that one is able instantly to name the persons represented.

At old deaf and dumb native named Winjarro, nicknamed 'Dummy,' belonging to the Dongars district, shows his keen powers of observation in his perfect mimicry of the white people with whom he has come in contact, or by whom he has been employed as shepherd during his long life. He will by a motion of body, head, or arm, bring to instant recognition the person whom he is mimicking. He can also trace the brand of every settler in the district on the sand or on paper, and if anyone makes one of these brands on the ground, 'Dummy' instantly mimics the owner of the brand, taking some slight peculiarity of the white man, such as a pompous bearing, a peculiar angle at which the hat may be worn, an odd manner of gait, foppish twirling of moustache or beard, any little characteristic or mannerism is seized upon and bracketed in his mind with the person, who will always be recalled with his special peculiarity. Winjarro was taught by some white person to write his name 'Dummy' on the sand or on paper, which he does very freely and quickly. Whether Winjarro was deaf and dumb from his birth, there was no means of ascertaining, as almost all of his compatriots are dead. Before Flinders' departure from King George's Sound, he thought he would give the natives, with whom he had been on the most friendly terms throughout his stay, an exhibition of marine drill. One old man "placed himself at the end of the rank, with a short staff in his hand, which he shouldered, presented, grounded, as did the marines their muskets." (*Terra Australis*, Vol. I, 61.)

Flinders, Matthew. A voyage to Terra Australis. 2 vols. G. and W. Nicol, London, 1814.

The natives will observe at a glance anything comical or peculiar in the walk, action, gait or speech of a stranger, especially a white man, and the same evening you will hear screams of laughter coming from the camp, caused by some 'funny man' going through a perfect imitation of the speech and action of the stranger.

In these performances the audience will follow the movements of the actor with the keenest interest, refraining from applause or commendation until the mimicry is finished, when a lively discussion will take place as to the correctness of the mimicry, the slightest alteration at once being observed. The mistake is pointed out and the correction gone through, so that when the performance is repeated the actor is 'letter perfect,' so to speak.

When Bishop Gibney visited the R.C. Native Mission at Beagle Bay, he held a confirmation service at which all the natives assembled. After the service the natives returned to their camps, and not long afterwards the Bishop and myself watched them reproduce the whole proceeding exactly as it has been conducted by the Bishop, and when it is remembered that such a service had never been seen before by the natives, their facility in reproducing it so perfectly shows them to possess no mean powers of observation and retention. They repeated the Latin prayers with absolute fidelity to the original, the sort sounding Latin being quickly learned than the harsher English, and the

same earnestness of demeanour observed in their teachers will be repeated on their faces as they recite the Latin responses and prayers which they have learned so quickly.<sup>36/97-99</sup>

The quickness with which the natives grasp white people's songs and games is amazing. Cornally [informant] says that often when travelling through the bush he heard Irish songs sung by what he thought were white men - "Oh, Molly Reilly, I love you", and such others, and thinking there was a camp of white men in the vicinity he would hasten his steps only to find a camp of natives all singing this or some other song with all their might.<sup>36/103</sup>

### ▪ Mimic Battles and Duels

...and mimic battles with toy spears frequently took place amongst them. Duels also were fought, and there were trials of skill with *kyley* and spear and kangaroo and emu hunts, the children taking turns of hunter and hunted.<sup>36/100</sup>

[The elder boys often indulge in mock fights, being encouraged in this by their elders in order to acquire dexterity in handling their weapons. (Catlin gives an account of a similar practise amongst the North American Indians, Vol., 131)]<sup>36/114</sup>

Catlin, George. The manners, customs and condition of the North American Indians. By George Catlin. Written during eight years' travel amongst the wildest tribes of Indians in North America, 1832-39. 2 Vols. G. Catlin, London, 1841.

#### **see also:**

Catlin, George. Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians. 2 vols. Wiley and Putnam, New York, 1841.

### ● Mimic Duels

Mimic duels with toy or reed spears are also fought, and in this manner the young people are early taught the methods of offence and defence.<sup>36/88</sup>

The 'rush game' is played between two boys who stand about 30 yards apart. Rushes grow on the Gascoyne River and other places, having a very sharp thorn on the point, and being somewhat thicker than the ordinary rush. The thick end is split about three inches down and the rush is then hurled by each boy at his opponent. They sometimes get wounds in many places from this game.<sup>36/102</sup>

### ● Mimic War

A game was played with spears in the following manner. Two lines of boys stood about 50 yards apart from each other, about 12 in each row. Each boy held 5 or 6 spears in his left hand. As soon as the lines faced each other, the boys selected their opponents and threw their spears simultaneously.<sup>36/102</sup>

The spears were thrown very quickly and were warded off by those held in the hands which acted as shields. After some little time one of the lines would show signs of wavering, and as soon as this was observed, the victorious line followed up their advantage and pressed the beaten line until they dropped their spears and ran away pursued by their victors.<sup>36/102</sup>

The boys are watched closely in their spear throwing games. In the Southern groups the spears became a fine art. Jabaitch excelled in spear dodging.<sup>36/88</sup>

Dodging or avoiding spears, kailees etc. darn'naburn [Vasse]<sup>37/301</sup>  
Dodging spears kwel' gurning [Williams]

### • Throwing blunted spears

Eyre says (*Eyre's Disc.* 226 et seq II) "Boys who are very young have small reed spears made for them by their parents, the ends of which are padded with grass, to prevent them from hurting each other. They then stand at a little distance, and engage in a mimic fight, and by this means acquire early that skill in the use of this weapon for which, in after life, they are so much celebrated. At other times round pieces of bark are rolled along the ground, to represent an animal in the act of running, at which the spears are thrown for the sake of practice."<sup>36/113</sup>

Eyre, Edward John. *Journals of the Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia and Overland from Adelaide to King Georges Sound in the years 1840-1.* Vol. 1. T. and W. Boone, London, 1845: 226.

[An amusement of the adults, is a large bunch of emu feathers tied together, (fig. 1. Pl. 1.) which is held out and shaken as if in defiance, by some individual, whilst the others advance to try to take it out of his hands. This occasions an amusing struggle before the prize is gained, in which it is not uncommon to see from ten to twenty strong and lusty men rolling in a heap together. This is a sort of athletic exercise amongst them, for the purpose of testing each other's strength. On such an occasion they are all unarmed and naked.]

The game of *boorna jokee* - throwing blunted spears at a human target - was common throughout the West and was also a game played by the Victorian tribes.<sup>36/111, 36/93, (game word from Baabur's games 36/110)</sup>

Mimic war took place amongst the young members of a camp.[Mimic war took place amongst the men.<sup>36/110</sup>] One of their number stood in the centre and a line of natives (*nyungar*) ranged themselves in front of him and sent blunt spears at him from all along the line, all of which he dodged with great dexterity. Sometimes a shield was held in front, which helped to ward off the spears, but the better game consisted in the young man dodging the spears thrown simultaneously at him, by the movements of his body.<sup>36/93</sup> [This game might be continued all day. In this manner they perfected themselves in spear throwing and spear dodging.<sup>36/110</sup>]

### ▪ Mimic Feast

The Gingin natives [at Wonnerup] also had a 'Mock Feast' or Barmecide Feast game, variously called *beejan eeja*, *beejar abbin*, *kala joogurning*, *kala jalaburn* (fire game). They pretended to make a fire and cook meat. Then when the meat was supposed to be cooked they got a *jalgar* (bough plate) and arranged it for the meat, and also arranged some boughs for themselves to sit on. They took the meat and put it on a bough plate (*neen jug'urn* - putting meat on bough plates <sup>37/167</sup>), made a place beside them for their *kardoo* (wife), brushed off the ashes with another bough, then divided the pretended meat and went through the motion of eating it. Then the *kardoo* was asked if



her stomach was full. "Yes," she replied, as she swelled out her stomach, and the remainder of the meat was hung up to eat *boorda* (by and by).<sup>36/91-92</sup> [Then they pretend to hang up the remainder of the meat to eat *boorda* (by and by) when they are hungry.<sup>36/109</sup>]

### - Language [from the Gingin area]

Giving a "make-believe" feast – *Beejar, eeja, beejar abbin, kala koogurning, kala jalaburn*.<sup>37/159</sup>

Putting (meat) on "bough plates" – *Neen jug'urn* <sup>37/167</sup>

### • Nut Game

Another game of the Southwest natives was called *meetcha kambong* (nut game) or *boojur kombang* (ground game) and was thus played:- A small *meetcha* (red gum) nut was buried about six inches [to about a foot in depth<sup>36/100</sup>; you placed a nut far down in the ground<sup>36/110</sup>] in the ground and four or five strong young men stood round to guard it. [The game consisted in a number of natives trying to obtain the nut while an equal number endeavoured to prevent them [... from digging out the nut, they forced their hands away and carried them bodily from the place.<sup>36/110</sup>]; the sport was continued until the nut was secured, or the natives got tired. This game was really a succession of 'scrimmages' from start to finish.<sup>36/100</sup>] An equal number tried to break through and capture the nut. A scrimmage, somewhat resembling a football scrimmage, took place amongst the players until each side either got tired or one side won.

When the nut was captured all the winners [When the nut was obtained by the victors all the *nyungar*<sup>36/110</sup>] shouted "*Kaia, kaia, yaang, yaang, yaang doojara* (beat them), *ngai jinnong, jinnong* (see, see, I've got it)." The beaten side might resume the game in a month or so. This game was called *boojoor-el-eeja* in the Swan district.<sup>36/92</sup>

[Balbuk, informant Games = "*wabba*" <sup>36/111</sup>

*Boojoor-el-eeja*, before described. A *meeja* (or nut) was put in the ground to the depth of about a foot and the game consisted in a number of natives trying to get this nut out while an equal number would guard the nut and prevent its being taken.<sup>36/111</sup>]

### • Practical Jokes

Practical jokes had no place in native amusements, for the slightest ridicule deliberately cast upon one person by another is instantly provocative of a fight.

Should a native's ornaments come unfastened or any of the decorations get displaced, if a laugh happens to be raised by the circumstance, the wearer of the disarranged decorations immediately sulks and is not appeased until he has quarrelled with one or other of those who have ridiculed him. More often a spear or *kylie* will be hurled at the offender and a general fight is the result. All natives are hypersensitive to ridicule.<sup>36/94</sup>

### • Rounders

The Southwestern natives also played a game somewhat similar to European 'Rounders', a red gum nut being used for a ball.<sup>36/91</sup> [Whitchurch - informant 36/111].



## ▪ Shooting the Grass Blade

Mr. Robert Austin stated that during his explorations in Western Australia he found the game of 'shooting the grass blade' indulged in by the natives of Port Leschanault, who found great pleasure and amusement in throwing the tips of the grass tree leaves (about three inches long) into the bodies of blowflies.<sup>36/93</sup>

A similar game, played by the Queensland coastal natives, is thus described by Dr. Roth (*North Queensland Ethnology Bulletin, No. 4, 1902*): - "A piece of blade grass is cut to a suitable length and split upwards on either side of the petiole to a certain distance. The cut extremity of the grass is held loosely and horizontally between the lips while the split ends of the leaf are bent over a stick which is grasped with the right hand and held in the left. If the stick be now driven sharply forwards, the petiole is shot away, leaving the two halves of the blade behind in the left hand. Sometimes the stick is replaced by the forefinger of the right hand, occasionally the position itself of the grass blade is reversed, the split ends being held between the lips and the cut extremity in the left hand."<sup>36/93-94</sup>

Roth, Walter E. *North Queensland Ethnography: Bulletin No. 4. Games, Sports and Amusements.* Brisbane, Qld.: Edmund Gregory, Government Printer, William Street, 1902.

## ▪ Stick Game

A short game with a stick held across the hands and a quick manipulation that brings the same stick under the thumbs without moving the hands off the stick.<sup>36/102</sup>

## ▪ Stone Throwing (Ducks and Drakes)

The children played at skimming flat peddles over smooth surfaces of water, the same as white children did.<sup>36/101</sup>

## ▪ Story Telling

Story telling is another amusement amongst them. The old men relate traditional legends, ghost stories (*janga*), tales of their own or some favourite ancestor's prowess, etc. etc. The younger men will give an account in recitative of incidents connected with special journeys of revenge, murdering expeditions, strange hunting experiences where the animals they were hunting turned into *janga* (spirits) or disappeared altogether from their sight. One after another the memories are stirred and the stories grow in improbability as the interest of the hearers quickens. The dramatic rendering of these fireside tales is absolutely perfect, particularly in the 'animal stories' as, even if the hearer is ignorant of the dialect, but is familiar with the habits of Australian birds and animals, the gesticulations of the reciter will at once make known to him the animal or bird which forms the chief subject of the story. The 'bobbing' of the cockatoo on branch or twig, will be rendered with the utmost fidelity, and so with other familiar habits of birds and beasts.

To the younger people of both sexes, evenings like these are eagerly looked forward to, as they afford an opportunity for stolen interviews or at least an exchange of lovers' looks, and perhaps a word or two, for the young native girl is the most inveterate little intrigant and will 'play with fire' at any or every opportunity, notwithstanding her early knowledge of the cruelty inflicted for breaches of the social laws.<sup>36/95-96</sup>

Gossiping and scandalmonging (sic) are indulged in wherever two or three women, or two or three men, may be gathered together, and is quite as baneful in its effects amongst the aborigines as it is amongst white people. The native is by nature suspicious and 'Paul Pry's' of both sexes may often be found in the early morning scanning the tracks round the camp to see if any clandestine happenings occurred during the night. My own camp was subjected to the same scrutiny during the first months of my residence amongst them, after which time suspicions appeared to be allayed.<sup>36/96</sup>

F. F. Armstrong records in the *Perth Gazette* November 5 1836 that the natives "are known to be extremely sociable and very fond of gossiping, and their social amusements, besides mock spear fights and throwing the Kile.lee, is conversation round their fires at night. In the summer time the tribe for sixty miles around assemble, settle old grievances and raise new ones. At these meetings they entertain each other with the well known dances and chants etc of the corroboree; which chants are partly narratives of battles, and hunting matches and excursions to strange and distant tribes..."

Grey (*Journal*, Vol. II, 253) states that "In an encampment at night, the young men recount to one another their love adventures and stories and the old men quarrel with their wives or play with their children; suddenly a deep wild chant rises on the ear, in which some newly arrived native relates the incidents of his journey, or an old man calls to their remembrance scenes of other days ..."

Grey, George. *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-West and Western Australia, during the Years 1837, 38 and 39, with observations on the moral and physical condition of the aboriginal inhabitants, &c. &c.* Vol. 1 and 2. (Facsimile edition, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1964). T. and W. Boone, London, 1841.

During the performance the remaining members stand perfectly still, watching the game intently. When the scene is ended, two more take the place of kangaroo and hunter and the game proceeds. As no two natives hunt alike, the methods of each are noted by spectators and performers, in order that some fresh hint may be taken in the mode of kangaroo "stalking", called *yongar ngardongin* by the Vasse district people.

Moonlight nights are chosen for this kind of pastime, but the central fire also casts its light upon the players. There may or may not be musicians and singers for these displays, but the songs are not allusive, and the music is merely played for the rhythm and measure of the movements.

A dance for amusement only was called *ken wab'* or *ken-a-wab* (dance play) in the Esperance, Bremer Bay and Korrlup districts, the songs of which were *mai won'gan'yee* (voice talking).<sup>34/18</sup>

### • Baby Story

In the Northern coastal districts, particularly along the Ninety Mile Beach, Broome, Beagle Bay, Sunday Island, etc., all babies are supposed to come from jimbin (under the ground).

... Jimbin is the home of the *ngargalul*, or spirit babies, but no *ngargalul* has ever returned to jimbin after it has once left it, for when the *ngargalul* is born and grows, it ceases to be a *ngargalul* and is a boy or girl as the case may be, and when that boy or girl dies its spirit goes to *Loomurn*, which is westward over the sea, where all the coastal natives go when they die. These *ngargalul* can be seen by *jalngangooroo* at any time, playing about in their own country or at the bottom of the sea, or on the beach.<sup>5/249</sup>

## • String Figures

Cat's cradle, guessing and many other games familiar to European children were played by the young aborigines, all over the State ...<sup>36/100</sup>

*Meeroo-meeroo*, string games, were played all over the state. Cat's cradle, in which the devices were far more intricate than in the European game; imitations of animals' and birds' feet and many other most ingenious designs were reproduced with fur, fibre or spinifex string.<sup>36/92</sup>

String puzzles are another species of amusement with them. In these a European would be surprised to see the ingenuity they display and the varied and singular figures which they produce. [Cat's cradle and various games with string are also known to them. Eaglehawk and emu's feet are also made of string.<sup>36/105</sup>]

Perfect representation of emu's feet, kangaroos and other animals have been made from a piece of string by Jubyché, the Guildford native, and many intricacies in what is known as 'cat's cradle' amongst English children, are practised by the women and children. (Dreffenbach states that this is also an amusement of the N. Zealand children, Vol.II, 32) The youngsters are taught to make string from human hair, kangaroo sinews, and from spinifex, to manufacture spears, kileys, and other native weapons, to climb trees, to help in collecting roots, etc. (though this task is the prerogative of the little girls).<sup>36/114</sup>

Dieffenbach, Ernst. *Travels in New Zealand: with contributions to the geography, geology, botany and natural history of that country.* 2 vols. J. Murray, London, 1843.

Eyre says (Eyre's Disc. 226 et seq. II)

"String puzzles are another species of amusement with them. In these a European would be surprised to see the ingenuity they display and the varied and singular figures which they produce."<sup>36/113-114</sup>

Eyre, Edward John. *Journals of the Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia and Overland from Adelaide to King Georges Sound in the years 1840-1.* Vol. 1. T. and W. Boone, London, 1845.

## • String Games – *Nyame!* Notebook 1, P.57 <sup>36/115</sup>

Names of movements, opening A, opening A, positions 1 and 2.

Radial, thumb string  
Ulna " "  
Radial 1<sup>st</sup> finger  
Ulna 1<sup>st</sup> finger  
Radial 2<sup>nd</sup> finger

Ulna 2<sup>nd</sup> finger  
Radial 3<sup>rd</sup>?  
4<sup>th</sup>?  
Proximal side nearest arm  
Distal end of fingers  
Navahoe movement

## ▪ Swimming

All natives occupying the littoral were good swimmers and before the advent of the whites many swimming races were held in the rivers and estuaries of the South and Southwest also on the Northern coast. Men and women took part in these swimming contests held in the South-western estuaries and rivers, the women being generally the best swimmers.<sup>36/89</sup>

What might be called 'Point to Point' swimming races of two and three miles in length might be held in the rivers of the South-west (not in the estuaries, as that led to cheating), the Capel district natives being expert in this amusement, also in diving, floating, remaining beneath the water, etc.<sup>36/89</sup>

[The Capel natives were very good swimmers and held many diving, floating and swimming games ...Women were expert swimmers and invariably beat the men whenever they entered against them.<sup>36/111</sup>]

Swimming races in the estuaries and rivers *kow'in'yung ngeerig* [Wonnerup] <sup>37/170</sup>  
I can swim *ngai kallooree kan'gina* [Broome] <sup>37/454</sup>

## ▪ Throwing Bark

A game for boys and girls was played with the aid of a piece of bark about 3 inches long, which they shaped at the ends and sides somewhat like a *yandee*. This they threw against the wind and it described a circular motion in the air before it came down to earth. The '*little yandeers*' looked very pretty flying about in the air, each child shouting out that his or her piece of bark was the best 'flier'.<sup>36/103</sup>

## ▪ Tops

The nuts of the red gum were used by the Southern natives as spinning tops, the game being called *mee-jee coorong* or *meetcha koorong*. The country of the red gum was generally termed *meejee-meejee*.<sup>36/91, 36/111</sup>

### - In the Ooldea District.

*Wandiarra*, let be! let it alone.

*Guna djunggula nyinnain*

*Yuria nyinnain*

*Mundongga guna dhunggulu nyinnain*

*guna daggudhula nyinnain, bunari*, best one <sup>Notebook 6b, P. 18 36/117</sup>

## All terms used when spinning the quandong kernel.

*Jiji yaggu guna*

*Jiji madu guna*

*Guna djuga gula nyinnain*

*Waddi jilbi guna munda*

*Jung galu nyinnain*

*Kungga womba gunanga mundanga*

*jula nyinnin*

(soft)

*Kungga womba ulainyi*

old woman crying

(humming sound) Notebook 6b, P. 18 36/117

Bommilya and Wadhingga used these expressions as they spun the *widerr* (kernel of burnburn - quandong) on a wooden slab by my tent. They held the *widerr* between first and second fingers.<sup>36/117</sup>

*Warnini* - to spin kernel, *werrarda*, *warnin*.

*Bunari* - best one, leader (Used when spinning quandong nuts and it keeps spinning for a long time).

*Yuri nyinnain* - spinning (what we call a 'sleeping top').

Spinning still or quite - *kutu* - 'eye' - the top of the sleeping kernel.<sup>36/117</sup>

Did they have a game of ball-playing in Jubyche's tribe?

Meejee coorong, spinning a red gum nut. They did not play ball in Jubyche's tribe.<sup>36/105</sup>

[From Notebook 21 249.]

## ▪ Tracking and Making Animal Tracks

Tracking is mainly instinctive but it is brought to its high state of perfection by careful training, boys and girls being taught this necessary accomplishment.<sup>36/114</sup> The girls accompanied their mothers, root and seed gathering and all the children learned tracking.<sup>36/101</sup>

At the age of 9 or 10 the boys occasionally accompanied their fathers out hunting and learned how to track and stalk the game or perhaps went out by themselves and hunted the smaller game, rats, iguanas, etc.<sup>36/101</sup> [Note on page. Cornally, informant. Gascoyne district. Notebook 3b, p.82.]

It has been noticed that all their games have an instructive tendency, a frequent amusement being the making of animals' and birds' tracks on the flat surface of some sandy spot pressed into uniformity for the occasion. The tracks are usually made with the fingers and finished off with a little stick and sides are sometimes taken by the older men as to the relative correctness of the markings.<sup>36/113</sup> [...tracks of birds and animals will be made in the sand, sometimes under the superintendence of an old man.<sup>36/88</sup>]

### ▪ **Vulgar Games - Spittle Game**

Many vulgar games, such as catching the spittle in the hand and flicking it in a boy's face, were known to the natives. This trick was called *wig-gee*.<sup>36/102</sup>

### ▪ **Wrestling**

Wrestling was also stated to have been a favourite game with the young male natives. The young men engaging in this pastime placed their hands on each other's shoulders, and struggled, pushed and pulled until one of them falls. The victor at once returned to his place, often quite exhausted with the contest, which generally lasted some time.<sup>36/110, 36/93</sup>

- **Language:** *Banya goongar* (perspiration rolling off him).<sup>from Baabur's games 6/110</sup>

## Notes from Informants

### Bates informants include:

- Edward Cornally
- Constable Pollett - Northhampton Police
- T.A. Drage - Murchison, Mount View.
- Old Billy - Geraldton
- Yoogalba (sourcerer from Geraldton)
- Marratharra(female) - Dhoon-gara (Dongara) dialect information
- Woolber
- F.A. Hedge
- "Yabaroo" Ashburton
- J. Brown – Roebourne
- Tom Carter – N.W. of W.A.
- **Joobytch** was the last Perth district native, died 1907, the son of **Yalgunga** who met Lieutenant Irwin of "Crawley" (white haired) in 1829.]<sup>36/3</sup>

● **Cornally**, informant Gascoyne. Notebook 3b, P.181 [-184].<sup>365/36/102-104</sup>

**I** The natives used to play the game of pretending to swallow a pebble or any small object, and then bringing it out of their ears, or throat or nose, or any part of their heads or faces except their mouths. This is a game very common amongst European children.

**II** Making devil faces, just as the European children do, is a common game with the natives.

**III** A short game with a stick held across the hands and a quick manipulation that brings the same stick under the thumbs without moving the hands off the stick.<sup>36/102</sup>

**IV** Many vulgar games, such as catching the spittle in the hand and flicking it in a boy's face, were known to the natives. This trick was called *wig-gee*.<sup>36/102</sup>

**V** A game was played with spears in the following manner. Two lines of boys stood about 50 yards apart from each other, about 12 in each row. Each boy held 5 or 6 spears in his left hand. As soon as the lines faced each other, the boys selected their opponents and threw their spears simultaneously.<sup>36/102</sup>

The spears were thrown very quickly and were warded off by those held in the hands which acted as shields. After some little time one of the lines would show signs of wavering, and as soon as this was observed, the victorious line followed up their advantage and pressed the beaten line until they dropped their spears and ran away pursued by their victors.<sup>36/102</sup>

**VI** The "rush game" is played between two boys who stand about 30 yards apart. Rushes grow on the Gascoyne River and other places, having a very sharp thorn on the point, and being somewhat thicker than the ordinary rush. The thick end is split about three inches down and the rush is then hurled by each boy at his opponent. They sometimes get wounds in many places from this game.<sup>36/102</sup>

**VII** A game for boys and girls was played with the aid of a piece of bark about 3 inches



long, which they shaped at the ends and sides somewhat like a *yandee*. This they threw against the wind and it described a circular motion in the air before it came down to earth. The “*little yandies*” looked very pretty flying about in the air, each child shouting out that his or her piece of bark was the best “*flier*”.<sup>36/102-103</sup>

**VIII** The quickness with which the natives grasp white people’s songs and games is amazing. Cornally [informant] says that often when travelling through the bush he heard Irish songs sung by what he thought were white men - “Oh, Molly Reilly, I love you”, and such others, and thinking there was a camp of white men in the vicinity he would hasten his steps only to find a camp of natives all singing this or some other song with all their might.<sup>36/103</sup>

**IX** The game of passing a lighted stick from one to another is played by the young natives, also putting a small lighted stick in their mouths, similar games being played by European children.<sup>36/103</sup>

**X** A game was played at night also by the Broome district groups with lighted *kylies* by the boys and young men who would stand certain distances apart and having lighted one point of their *kylee* would throw them up in the air where they would remain circling round and round for several minutes without coming to the ground. A very dark night was chosen for this game, which might be termed a species of “*native fireworks*”.<sup>36/103</sup>

- **Language:** Fire Game with boomerangs Kumbaldhanoo kallongoo. (E of Peak Hill).<sup>36/67, 37/n.p.</sup>

The *kylees* were thrown straight forwards, and after going some distance (without touching the ground at all), they rose up in the air, each *kylee* performing its own circular motion without coming into contact with any of the others. All of them were whirling in the air at the same time. Even when their force was spent and they fell to the ground they did not clash, but came quietly down within a little distance of each other. As soon as they alighted they were again and again thrown up by the boys, the game lasted sometimes for hours. The spectacle of these lighted sticks whirling round and round in the darkness must have been very curious.<sup>36/103</sup>

The two varieties of *kyles* used by the Gascoyne, Ashburton and most of the natives of the Nor’West are the light *kylee* mentioned above, called *walanu*, which, when thrown, does not touch the ground in its flight and the “*thoora-bandee*” or “*wit-ba*”, another and a heavier *kylee* which always touches the ground in its flight first and which is used to kill ground game.<sup>36/103-104</sup>

The light *kylee* is generally used in a fight after a corroboree and such is the swiftness and force with which it is thrown that Cornally [informant] has frequently seen natives instantly killed by one of these weapons.<sup>36/104</sup>

• **From Notebook 21**<sup>36/105</sup>

**249.** Did they have a game of ball-playing in **Jubyche’s** tribe?<sup>[P.26 36/105 [From Notebook 21/249.]</sup>

“*Meejee coorong*”, spinning a red gum nut. They did not play ball in **Jubyche’s** tribe.<sup>P. 74</sup>

The old game of telling the number of one's sweethearts by cracking the fingers has been known to the Perth natives since before the advent of the white men. Cat's cradle and various games with string were also known to them. Eaglehawk's and emu's feet are also made of string.<sup>36/105</sup>

**Woolber**, informant.<sup>36/109</sup>

*Ngabong* – games

The Gingin natives played a kind of hide and seek called "*kamban*".

*Kambaning* = sending a young man away to hide and then looking for, shouting *kamban kamban, ah Woolber!*<sup>36/109</sup>

*Beejar eeja* or *Beejar abbin*

*Kala joorgu, kala jalaburn*

• **F.A. Wodge 50/99**

'When out hunting the native is always looking for tracks, he finds most of his game this way, often spending hours tediously tracking them up during the laying season, they will track an emu for hours, in the hope of finding its nest which may contain a dozen eggs.'<sup>50/99</sup>

**Amusement, games, etc.**

With the exception of singing and the corroboree, I don't think they have any, though they may go in for larks and jokes sometimes, often with the intention of creating consternation among the women.<sup>50/99</sup>

• **MS 365 Section 49/136-50/112**

**Section XII 2D, 10 [Questionnaires – handwritten comments]**

**1904 Western Australia Native Vocabulary, etc.**

**Compiled by "Yabaroo" Ashburton ...**

**[91 Questions – continued.]**

**15. Corroborees, amusement, games – are these symbolical? and if so, of what?**

In the Nor West they have the emu ceremony which is a curious imitation of the ways & actions of that bird.

**1904 Western Australia Native Vocabulary, etc.**

**Compiled by Roebourne informant J. Brown**

**[91 Questions – continued.]**

**Corroborees, amusement, games – are these symbolical? and if so, of what?**

I do not think so.

• **[Information from other sections]**

**Tom Carter [N.W. of W.A.]**

8. They also made very good catamarans (booteners) out of stump cork wood trees, growing on \_\_\_, by pegging together, endways, two straight lengths with hard wood pegs, and a third stem piece curving upwards. Pegs were driven in sides at an angle of 45° and interwoven with reeds (*janjits*).<sup>50/40</sup>

9. The natives knelt on them and paddled out to reef with their hands, sometimes going outside the reef 3 miles on open sea to the Black Rock.<sup>50/40</sup>

“Cats cradle” was a game frequently played by women.<sup>50/44</sup>

## **Newspaper article**

### **▪ Bates, Daisy. MS 365 88/588**

#### **Children of the Stone Age: The Little Primitives of Australia.**

Our lady correspondent in Western Australia sends us some notes on childlife among the native races in Australia long before the arrival of white men, the people who are perhaps more primitive than any other race on the Earth.

She says that by watching the play of the children, which is largely imitation of their elders and particularly of their mothers, more can be learned of native life than by watching the grown-up natives. The reason is that till they are five or six years old the children are constantly with their mothers.

The small child, with only a bunch of leaves tied round with a piece of string for a doll, will play with its doll and build for it a tiny beehive-shaped shelter like that which the mother builds for the family, and there put the doll to bed. The doll of a white child does not suit the little native child; it is frightened at its eyes.

#### **What the Children Can Do**

The child of five years old has its own digging stick for getting up roots, grubs, and other foods. It knows the names of animals and plants, the tracks of reptiles and birds, and the places where the mallee-hen's eggs are most likely to be found.

The children can pick out the footprints of the older people in the sand and identify those of each person without making a mistake. They know the exact relationship between all the people in a group -- who will give them food, whom they may visit, and whom they must avoid. Indeed they learn instinctively all the simple yet clever knowledge of the race that is necessary for their living. Their knowledge of the ways of animals is complete in a simple way, for their life is closer to animal life than that of any other humans.<sup>88/588</sup>

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## Cultural Areas of Australia

Cultural Areas mentioned in the references are based on a system adopted by museums around Australia in the 1980s to assist with organising artefacts in their collections. There has been a further revision of cultural areas/regions but because many references have been based on the earlier work this has been used.









**Games and Amusements of Australian  
Aboriginal peoples as outlined in the  
'Papers of Daisy Bates': principally dealing  
with the south west region of Western  
Australia.**

**Daisy M. Bates**

**CISER**