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CLASS DIVISIONS

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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Dr. Scott Nind, Medical Officer at King George's Sound between 1826 and 1829, was perhaps the first to draw attention to the Class divisions existing amongst the W.A. aborigines, and although later and more authentic information upsets several of his accounts of these divisions, still, to him must be given the credit of having been the first discoverer of the class system obtaining amongst the natives of Southern part of this State. Dr. Nind's statements are consequently well worth quoting :- "The classes Erniung and Tem," he states (Journal Geographical Society, vol I, 1831, pp. 38, 42-3) "are universal near the Sound (K.G.S.) (Albany), but the distinctions are general, not tribal. Another division almost as general is into Moncalan and Torndirrup; yet there are a few who are neither. These can scarcely be distinguished as tribes and are very much intermingled. The Moncalan is, however, more prevalent to the eastward of our establishment and the Torndirrup is to the westward. They intermarry and have each again their subdivisional distinctions, some of which are peculiar and some general; of these are the Opperheip, Cambien, Mahnur, etc. What I, however, consider more correctly as tribes are those which have a general name and a general district, although they may consist of Torndirrup or Moncalan, separate or commingled. These are, I believe, . . . named by the kind of game or food found most abundant in the district. The inhabitants of the Sound and its immediate vicinity are called Meananger, probably derived from mearn, the red root . . . and anger to eat. . . The natives residing on the Bight and extending to the coast about North West Cape, are called Murran . . . These tribes are also not universally divided into Erniung and Tem . . . Adjoining them inland is the Yabberore. Next to them is the Will or Weil district which is a very favourite country, and may probably be named from well or weit (ants' eggs) . . . Next to the Weil district is that of Warrangle, or Warranger, from warre (kangaroo).

"Although every individual would immediately announce to us his tribal name and country, yet we have not been able to trace any regular order of descent. The son follows his mother as Erniung or Tem, and his father as Torndirrup or Moncalan. Beyond this we have not been able to penetrate, for half brothers are not infrequently different. This would probably be caused by cross marriages. From this same cause also their divisions of relationships are very numerous. Eicher - mother; cuinker - father; mourert - brother or sister; konk or Conk - uncle, etc.

"In their marriage they have no restriction as to tribe, but it is considered best to procure a wife from the greatest distance possible. The son will have a right to hunt in the country from whence the mother is brought. The whole body of the natives are divided into two classes Erniung and Tem or Taaman; and the chief regulation is that these classes must intermarry, that is an Erniung with a Taaman. Those who infringe this rule are called Yuredangera and are subject to very severe punishment. The children always follow the denomination of the mother. Thus a man who is Erniung will have all his children Taaman; but his sister's children will be Erniungs. This practice is common to all the tribes in the neighbourhood with the exception of the Murrans."

Dr. Nind, in a short vocabulary attached to his paper, furnished the following names of the tribes and classes :-

Names of Tribes

Meernanger	Warrangle
Murram	Weil
Yabbarore	Corine

Names of Classes

Erniung	Taaman or Tem
Moncalan	Torndirrup
Obberup	Cambien
	Mahnur

Of the names furnished by Dr. Nind, Meenungur, Yabbaro, Weel, Wurangu and Kurin, are applied to certain district natives at the present day, and have apparently always designated the

localities and people which now bear them. With regard to the other tribal names, Murram is the universal term in Katanning, Albany, Kojonup, Jerramungup and other districts for father's sister's son's son, the term being reciprocal. Tem (or dem) is the Albany district word for brothers' and sisters' children (father's sister's children and mother's brother's children - "first cousins"). Torndirrup (Tondarup) represents one of the principal subdivisions of the two primary subdivisions. Beyond these, none of the other words submitted by Dr. Nind, can be found, on the closest inquiry, to be connected with either tribe or class division in the South.

Cambien (Kambeen) is used in Beverley, York and places further east, to express what we call the "niece" relationship, and in Katanning and other districts to represent "own" daughter or son. Mahnur (Maanur or Mannur) is the Albany dialectic word for the long-tailed iguana, and was the totem of some members of one of the primary divisions of the South; Maanur is the Perth equivalent for "broad leaches". Moncalan (mon'galang) means "giddy, light-headed, having a fit, etc." in the Perth dialect. Obberup may be either the imperfect rendering of ngabberup, a relationship term only, or ubari - borungur or totem. Notwithstanding these minor errors, which are naturally the outcome of an inadequate knowledge of the intricacies of "class and relationship terms", Dr. Nind's statement that "the whole body of the southern natives is divided into two classes" is correct. At the present day, the natives of the southern districts have two primary phratries, Manitchmat (or Manaitchmat) and Wordungmat, "White Cockatoo and Crow", and the marriage laws of these two phratries are, except in the matter of descent, almost exactly as Dr. Nind stated, a Wordung man marries a Manitch woman, the children being Wordungmat ("Crow" stock).

Sir George Grey partly confirms Dr. Nind's statement of the Class system in his "Journals". Grey, whose personal studies were practically confined almost exclusively to the natives of the Southwest coastal districts, notices the existence of these two remarkable laws amongst the Southern people :-

1st. That children of either sex always take their mother's family name.

2nd. That a man may not marry a woman of his own family name.

The first statement only holds amongst those Southern tribes having maternal descent, but the second law prevails throughout the State. Within recent times, owing partly to the paucity of females of the proper marrying class, but mainly to the settlement of the country by the whites, and the consequent immunity from native punishment provided for offences against recognised native law, mootch, yurdabilbil, or wrong class marriages became frequent amongst the Southern people. The rapid extinction of most of the Southern coastal tribes is imputed by the few old men still living, to the defiance of the old native laws which always made death the penalty for such an offence.

Grey, whose observations cover the years 1837 - 39, furnishes the following names of the great Southern families, the number of classes being given as seven :-

Ballaroke
 Idondarup
 Ngotak
 Nagarnock
 Nogonyuk
 Mongalung
 Narrangur

Grey states also that he found that in different districts the members of these families were given local names which he understood to indicate some particular branch of the principal families. The most common local names were :-

Didaroke	Kotejumeno
Gwerrinjoke	Nanyungo
Maleoke	Yungaree
Waddaroke	Djekoke

These family names were, according to Grey, common over a tract of country extending between four and five hundred miles in lat-

itude; they apply to that part of W.A. which lies between 30° and 35° S. latitude. Beside the above, the following local names have been taken from Grey's Dictionary :-

Djinbemongera	Karbunga
Kijjinbroon	Koolama
Kuljak	Maleomeno
Nagkarn	Woordookoomeno
Woortwauk	Ballard or Ballagore
Eroto	

Some of these names were supposed to have been derived from some vegetable or animal, at one time common in the district, and which formed the principal food of the families bearing those names. To other names a mythological origin was attributed in which the birds or animals were transformed into men and founded the family, such as Kuljak - a species of swan - the family of the Ballarokes were said to owe their origin to the transformation of these birds into men. The most detailed inquiries amongst the living representatives of the Southern coastal natives, fail to substantiate Grey's Class Divisions and their segmentations. The various names were submitted to old natives representing districts from Gingin, Moore River, York, Swan district, Perth, Pinjarra, Bunbury, Busselton, to Albany and Esperance, with the following result :-

Ballaroke (Ballarruk) is one of the sub-divisions of the Southern Primary phratries, exogamous divisions.

Tdondarup (Tondarup) is also one of the sub-divisions of the Southern people.

Ngotak. The only meaning that has been found for this word lies in its apparent relation to the term ngwoota, meaning very dark or black. (Ngwoota murnong was a term applied to very dark skinned natives by their fairer brethren. The expression was current amongst the Bunbury, Vasse, Augusta and Albany district natives.)

Nagarnook forms one of the sub-divisions of the people ranging between Gingin and Augusta.

Nogonyuk (Ngoogonyuk) A low very dark type of Ballarruks bears this name, its particular locality being the Swan and Murray districts.

Mongalung. No meaning can be ascertained for this name (unless the Perth native's statement that it is meant "lighthheaded" be accepted.)

Narrangur may either be a misprint of warrangur, or it may be derived from narranga = hungry, a word used north and east of Albany.

Didaroke (Didarruk) is one of the four subdivisional names and is found in native pedigrees from Gingin to Augusta. Didar is the term applied to spearwood in the Katanning, Kojonup and other districts and giĵ borungur are invariably called Didarruk, and are either Manitch or Wordung.

Gwerrinjoke. No meaning can be found for this word. The affix uk means "belonging to", and this name as well as others, may have been given to the children of some particular native. (see Waddaruk)

Maleoke (Meluk) Fair skinned. Mela murnong are fairskinned Tondarups, and Didarruks, as contrasted with ngwoota murnong (dark skinned Ballarruks and Nogarnooks). Melok is also the Vasse and Murray River term for "salmon" and may be either another term for light coloured people. It was the totem of some of the sea coast natives of the Vasse. (The definition of fair and dark coloured people, given by the natives themselves, distinctly points to a fusion of at least two races, the Manitchmat division being acknowledged by all natives to be the fairer people.)

Waddaruk, descendants of Waddar, a Ballarruk, a brother of Abba-daia, both Swan River natives.

Dejekoke. Balbuk, the last Perth native (who died March 20th, 1907) stated that these were some people who lived on the Kakkar or east side of York, "people who lived by themselves, and were called Jakkuk." (Later information confirmed Balbuk's statement, a wild cherry totem people (Jeeukwuk or Jeeukuk) living eastward of the Meenungur, and the women of these intermarrying with the Meenungur brought the name amongst the western and southern people.)

Kotejumeno. Probably kootajoo murnong - maternal relations - "from the same bag or womb" (koota = bag, womb).

Namyungo. Probably a request for food, yungo, yoongo = give. In some parts of the South, namyungo is the equivalent for emu. In the Swan district the word meant "give me that".

Yungaree, natives, a collective noun. (yoongar = native, yoon-garree = natives.)

Djinhemongera (Jinbeenyoongar) Balbuk stated that some Jinbee yoongar lived about the hills of the Darling Range, near the Canning River. They were "swamp people" and had Ballarruk, etc., amongst them.

Karbunga (Kalburnong), a species of edible bird).

Kijjinbroon (geejee = spear?). No meaning can be found for this word.

Koolama. Kweelam - the swamp hen or red-billed coot. No class signification, although the Kweelam figures in local legendary lore.

Kuljak, the Swan, no class signification. Some of the Gingin natives had the kuljak as their borungur (totem), and "sang" for an increase of swans and swans' eggs at certain times of the year, the nesting season probably.

Maleomene (mela murnong) - fair skinned people, Tondarups, etc., Dornda dornt, etc., are also equivalents for fair or light coloured.

Nagkarn Grey stated that this was a kind of fish which the natives subsisted on. Nagarn nganning, according to Balbuk, meant "eating little fish".

Woordookumene (woordoo-ka-murnong), a relationship term only, meaning "brother stock", people who are "like brothers to us".

Woort-wauk An Albany term with a similar meaning to woorda-ka-murnong. (The final syllable of most Perth and Southwestern words is dropped in the Albany district, hence woordoo becomes woort, maata (leg) maat, kaata (head) kaat, and so on; woort-wuk = brother stock)

Ballard or Ballagora, a species of opossum according to Grey.

No special connection with the Ballarruk division can be traced to this word, although ballawara, a species of opossum, was the totem of some of the Southern people.

Eroto, a species of duck, no class signification.

G.F. Moore, a contemporary of Grey, whose West Australian dictionary was founded on that of Grey, states that there were five principal families amongst the Southern people :- Ballarok, Didarok, Dtondarap, Naganok, Ngotak. These are further segmented by Moore as under :- "Ballarok, Dtondarap and Waddarak, are said to be matta gain (literally "one leg", or derived from one common ancestor). The Ngotak and Naganok are of "one leg", the Nogonyok, Didarok and Djikok are of "one leg". (Moore's Dictionary, pp. 4.5)

Moore's local names differ somewhat from Grey's both in spelling and signification :-

Djinbenongerra is supposed by Moore to be a species of duck, and he states that according to fabulous tradition, the Ngotaks formerly belonged to this class of birds before they were changed into men. (Ngwoota, or ngoota, dark-skinned, is the only meaning that can be found for this word.)

Kotajumeno, the name given in the Murray River district to the Naganok family (the signification of this term has been previously given).

Kuljak, the black swan. The family ancestors of the Ballaroks are reputed to be these birds changed into men. (Kuljak was, however, the totem of some Gingin Nagarnook and Ballarruk, Tondarup, etc.)

Melok Local name of one of the great family denominations (the meaning of this name has already been furnished.)

Namyango, a name for the Dtondarap family in the Vasse district. (Meaning already given.)

Utamat, the local name given at King George's Sound to one of the principal family divisions, matrimonial classes. (No meaning discoverable.)

Waddarak. Proper name of the Canning Mountain people. (Waddar

was a native, a Ballarruk, who once lived at Biljarra or Jeejarra (some hills near the Upper Swan), and his descendants, amongst whom were Tondarup, Nagarnook, etc., were frequently called Waddarruk. (Balbuk and Jobaitch's information.)

Wurdukumeno, name of the Ballarok family at the Vasse River. (This word is applied by all the Southern Class Divisions when speaking of "brother stock".)

Yangori, Yangor. Proper name. Evidently from Yangor, name of the Ballarok family at the Vasse River. (A section of the Victoria Plains district natives were called Yangur, from their dialectic term yanga, "to go")

Nagkan (K.G.S.), a small species of fish from the use of which, in former times, the Naganok family are said to have obtained their name. (The subdivisional name, Nagarnook, was not used at Albany.)

Il-yanok, local name of one of the family denominations. (No meaning can be obtained for this word; probably a corruption of idalyuk.)

About 1860, a genealogical tree was compiled by Bishop Salvado, of Six Great Families, (or Matrimonial Classes) into which he stated the natives round New Norcia, Perth, etc., were divided. The branches of this tree set forth the marriage laws of these six families. An illustration of this genealogical tree was issued in one of the Official reports forwarded by the Bishop to the then Government. Dr. Salvado's Six Family names were as follows :- Tirarop, Palarop, Mondorop, Nocognok, Tondorop, Jiragiok.

Allowing for the fact that Dr. Salvado was a Spaniard, who, during the whole term of his missionary labours in West Australia, was unable to master the difficulties of English pronunciation, it is not surprising that he should have made mistakes in transcribing native words, more particularly when it is remembered that Grey and Moore, two contemporary Englishmen, differed in their phonetic reproduction of native names, etc. Hence Palarop may easily be translated into Ballarruk, Nocognuk

into Nogonyuk, Tirarop into Didarruk. Tondarup is scarcely a word that would give occasion for much variation in spelling, nevertheless, all four writers quoted have rendered it differently. Mondorop is derived from monder, the hair on the pubes, and is not a class name at all. Jirdajuk is the New Norcia district equivalent for Nagarnook, but the term Nagarnook replaces it in the Southwestern portions of the Victoria Plains district.

Compare this family tree with that of Bishop Salvado (incorrect).

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