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BURIAL RITES - Coldea

BURIAL RITESSunday, August 22nd

Wailguri, Dhaagulu and Yalliyalla came on Saturday night's train (21st) with Bajjing, Karrerrga, Bandala, Wijingga, Kanjida, Moalana, to perform the "monthly mind" and service for the dead. They came to my camp in the morning, the three men, behind them the women. Then we went to a fire south of my camp and west of the dead man's (Munggunindil's) last camp. Here the women stripped and with Wailguri leading they made a circuit round the dead man's camp, shouting single shouts at intervals. When they got to the ngura, they trotted round it, all crying, "Ga, ga, ga," and waving little green branches. Yalliyalla, Dhaaguli and I made a circuit on the north side and as we came in a line with the grave (though still west of it), the two men stooped down and waved their branches as if waving away evil spirit magic. (Between the inma storehouse and the grave this was done.) When we approached the grave, the women came trotting up, giving their single shout in unison - then they trotted round the grave, crying, "Ga, ga, ga" and then laid their branches on the grave and laid themselves down across it, rubbing thighs, legs and faces with sand from the grave. Then some of the logs were pulled up, one end resting on the branches covering the body and placing more live and dead branches on top they covered the whole grave and filled it in with the sand at the head of the grave until all the green was covered and a real grave mound remained. Then they came back - again making the circuit to my camp. I gave them all a meal. (They did not cry or make any noise when returning.)

After the meal we went to Jundabil's grave, performing exactly the same ceremony, but Wilgidi and Kangija who had been with us at Munggunindil's grave and were rubbed there, did not accompany us to Jundabil's grave, but remained behind with Nyannauera, who was also at Munggunindil's grave.

We covered poor Jundabil with sand and made the same sort of mound, but we burned his ngura and the rags, etc., left in it. Two ngura we burned there, but none at Munggamindil's. However I expect Wailguri may burn that. They are returning to Immarna tomorrow (23rd) and the three men may take some of the long inna with them. Gave them tobacco, flour, tea, sugar and oatmeal. Wilgiri a frock and ball and golliwog and Anngamba a frock and Binjawa (golliwog) and Wadhunggu a ball.

The long walk, the trotting and the ceremonies, occupied some four hours or more. They have left Milaga's grave for me to perform the final ceremony of filling in, etc. Some were guri of the dead men, some kangguru, some kabbarli, undai, etc.

They are in deadly fear of Jinnaarbil and begged me to catch out and kill any whom I see. They tell me the Jinnaarbil will have walga (white, red or black or all bands) on their bodies and faces. They will come and revenge their dead.

In connection with the Australian custom of placing the dead body so that the eyes shall always see the sun, one of the most beautiful gestures of primitive religiousness was made during the burial ceremonies of Draijanu at Ooldea. We had chosen the spot for his grave which was dug east and west, the head being at the east end. Moongoomindil, a brother of the dead man, made some sign-query as to the eyes being able to see the early sun. Wongunma in reply raised his arm and with one great sweep took in the three hills over which the sun rises throughout the whole year, saying with gesture only that the morning sun will greet Draijanu from summer to winter and back again to summer.

When Moongoomindil's turn came, we buried him where his eyes would look upon the same sun rising over the same hills and where for him also there would be no darkness to fear for ever and ever.

Kurrbu binjunda - graves in tree. The relatives and "group" of the dead man wait in the vicinity until the kurrungga or kardilga (worms, maggots) fall or have fallen from the tree corpse. These they collect in wirra and eat them alive and raw, or will sometimes rest the wirra in the ashes until they are heated. This is also called miri mawgun. It is supposed to strengthen those who partake of it and lessens their sorrow for their dead. A cleared space is always made below the tree, so that the kurrungga can be picked up clean. (see 499)

Jandu : head covered in widowhood (501)

Widow wears mungari (head ring), kalbi (plumes, also worn on head) and dhadhada ("curtain") on head and bururu, many strands of string. (505)

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Oldea

Kangga "wale" or pole where wirongu dead go to Kanggarara a hot country.

Eucla

Burial of Wongalmi's people

Notebook 5c, P. 126

Head east, feet west, eyes looking south, right or spear arm tied to upper arm, also right leg tied to thigh, left arm and left leg loose, so that should babba (dogs) come, the dead man can wave them off with arm or leg. The coastal dead go seaward, but Wongalmi's dead appear to go westward. Position lying, head on tied right arm.