

Theories concerning the  
Origin of the Two Primary Classes

Page

- 1 The two classes supposed to be derived from two distinct races.  
Bird names applied mainly from colour and physique
- 2 Are the indigenes represented by Wordungmat or Manitchmat?
- 3 Distinction between these two classes today.  
Manitch's distrust of Wordung
- 4 No special totemic ceremonies in connection with Wordung and Manitch.  
The importance of the eaglehawk as "mammangurra", although in the S.W. Having no tribal or class significance.
- 6 Other theories regarding arrival of Manitchmat, etc.

## ORIGIN

### THE TWO PRIMARY CLASSES

(See also I, 1, page 37)

Now what was the origin of the two primary bird names? In discussing the Eaglehawk and Crow names of the Victorian tribes, the Rev. J. Mathew thinks there is no better explanation possible than that "the eaglehawk and crow represent two distinct races of men which once contested for the possession of Australia, the taller, more powerful and more fierce "eaglehawk" race overcoming, and in places exterminating the weaker, more scantily equipped sable "crows". (Op. cit. 19)

With regard to the two bird names of the primary class divisions of the Southern group of W.A. - Wordung and Manitch - these also appear to be applied mainly from colour and physique, and this forms a most interesting point in connection with these two classes. The readiness with which a native singled out a Manitch or Wordung from a group of visiting natives was frequently observed, and inquiries were pursued in this direction which disclosed the fact that a certain type of physique appeared to distinguish each class, and also that the Manitch were the fairer race, these different types still existing, notwithstanding the centuries of intermarriage between the classes. Moreover, the local names of both classes bear upon the colour. The Manitchmat are mela murnong = fair or light coloured people; jeedal-yuk, little grey insects; Tondarup (dornda = fair or light coloured) or dondurn = brown fishhawk. The Wordungmat are ngwoota murnong or ngwoota kum - black or dark skinned people.

The type of physique distinguishing the classes strongly differentiates them, so that a careful observer will as readily distinguish a Manitch from a Wordung, as a student of European ethnology will differentiate the Saxon, Keltic or Gaelic types in an English crowd.

The question arises as to which class or race were the first arrivals. If the theory of the Rev. J. Mathew - the Papuan-Dravidian-Malayan, be adopted, then the fairer stock were the indigenes. The theory enunciated in these pages -



Negritan-Papuan-Dravidian - coincides with the Rev. J. Mathew's to a certain extent, with this difference only, that he makes the Papuans, with a Negritan strain, the first arrivals, whereas in this work, the Negritans are presumed to have been the firstcomers, the Papuans being the second arrivals, and less stress has been placed on the admixture of the Malay element than in Mr. Mathew's theory. The Malay element did not penetrate S. of the MacDonnell ranges, which was a strict line of demarcation.

If the Negritans were the first arrivals, then the Wordungmat are their modern representatives, or if Mr. Mathew's theory is correct, the Mahitchmat or fairer stock were the indigenes.

It is, however, certain that the Manitchmat of the present day are the superior race, both in physique and in mental characteristics, while many of the Wordungmat retain the low, thickset, brutal, but remarkably wiry traits of their presumed Negritan ancestry.

Specimens of all these types, Negritan, Papuan, Dravidian and Malayan have been met with in this State, some of the three former being met with on the Southern and Southwestern coast, Eucla, Esperance, Fæser Range, etc., and in the Murchison and Eastern Goldfields districts, the Malayan being found most

frequently in the northern and Nor'West portion of the State. The Mac-Donnell Rgs. seem to be the distinct line of demarcation between the N. and S. and S.W. groups.

Assuming the Negritans to have been the first arrivals, it is not to be thought that they moved in a compact body to these shores. Darwin's theory is that primitive man travelled and foraged in small groups and since the Negritans were closely allied to primitive mankind, it may be postulated that these roving bands of hunters consisted of small "family" groups who travelled southward, eastward or westward, in their constant search for food. The subsequent invading horde of Papuans, either conquered or were conquered by, or assimilated with the first arrivals, as the strength of either party determined, and this would doubtless account for the prevalence of fair types met with in some districts (such as parts of the Murchison and Eastern Goldfields and also amongst some desert tribes), and for the exceedingly dark types encountered in other parts of the West. Might not the reason for the adoption of distinctive bird names lie chiefly in the savage idea of a



a powerful resemblance in colour between the man and the bird? and thus each race would bestow a distinctive name upon the other, the fairer Papuans calling the dark Negritans Crows, while the Negritans designated the Papuans White Cockatoos or Eaglehawk? And if, in the advancing ages, each group bearing the name of Eaglehawk, Crow, or White Cockatoo, found itself in possession of that name, without knowing how it came to possess it, what more natural to the primitive mind than to imagine a certain mysterious and personal connection between itself and the bird whose name it bore, even before "native magic" had been evolved?

All the West Australian myths are interwoven with birds and bird warfare, and particularly with quarrels between these three birds, and at the present day, the Manitchmat or White Cockatoo folk, if one or more Crows alight in their vicinity, believe that these are stranger Wordungmat about to work some mischief upon them. For the same reason, a Wordungmat will be careful not to mimic the cry of the White Cockatoo, feeling certain that should he do so, the Manitch will resent the mockery in some magical way.

In a measure these two classes or races are as distinct today, and as hostile towards each other, as in those distant ages, but it is also curious to note that at the present day the Manitch have a greater fear of the Wordung than the Wordung have of the Manitch. "They are our fathers," the Manitch say, "but we don't trust them, they are treacherous," yet in their quarrels a Manitch man must range himself beside his Wordung babbin/<sup>friend</sup> or kobong in a fight, and so with a Wordung man who will come to the assistance of his Manitch babbin or kobong. The primary totems are the class totems, Wordung and Manitch, and these cannot marry between themselves.

All Manitchmat are Manitch "borungur" (totem"-elder brother) and all Wordungmat are Wordung borungur. The question usually asked in the South and Southwest when knowledge is desired as to a visitor's class is, "Yinnok mata naitch?" (What "leg" or "stock" are you?) or "Yinnok naitch borungur?" (What borungur are you?), in each case the answer will be "Wordungmat,"



"Wordung borungur," or "Manitchmat", "Manitch borungur", such reply being given in the districts where the primary names have not been segmented. Borungur means "elder brothers", therefore a Manitch cannot marry a Manitch, nor a Wordung a Wordung; each must marry the other. The Wordung and Manitch are not venerated as totems, nor are there at the present day any ceremonies held in connection with them. The Manitch was always eaten by both classes, and in all districts except Gingin, the crow was eaten when caught. An old Gingin Wordungmat said they never eat crow "because they were all the same as self". This restriction clearly points to the Crow having been evolved into a special kind of a totem, since in Gingin, with the exception of the blue pigeon, which is called nganga we'nee, (mother long time dead) every other bird is an article of food, whether it be a totem bird or not. The crest and other feathers of the white cockatoo are frequently worn at dances and other ceremonies, and form valuable articles of commerce, but apart from the wearing of its feathers as decorations, there is no evidence, traditional or otherwise, that a totemic ceremony was ever performed for either eaglehawk, crow, or white cockatoo. The feathers of the eaglehawk were sometimes worn on the arms or formed a head or "tail" decoration, and a quill made the nosebone for the beedawong boy. They were also objects of exchange but the crow's feathers have apparently never been worn, nor have they any value as objects of barter.

Although there is no Eaglehawk division in the Southwest, in almost all the Southwest myths and legends this bird takes precedence of both crow and white cockatoo. In the Capel (S.W.) district, tradition says that the Walja/<sup>(eaglehawk)</sup> was the mammangurra ("father of all"), that he made the two primary divisions and that all the birds of the South were his children. The Crows and White Cockatoos were his moyer (nephews) yet the squeaker crow (bella or jeelak) was his wife. He represented in himself all the relationships, he was mamman (father), ngangan (mother), ngoondan (brother), jookan (sister), korda (husband), yogga (wife), demma (grandparent), nobba (child). The crow was his moyer yet he was also his ngoondan (brother) and nobba (child),



and so was the White Cockatoo. He married where he pleased, irrespective of class divisions. Legend relates that the eaglehawk separated the two primary classes in the following manner. He called the Crow and the White Cockatoo to him, and looking at the Crow he said, "Yinnok mooarn, yen'" (You are black, go away), and he turned to the Cockatoo and said, "Nyee dornda, gwab! yinnok ngunnong, gwab!" (This one is fair, good! you are mine, good!) and then the eaglehawk told the Crows that they were to take the White Cockatoos for their wives and he said the White Cockatoos must marry only Crow women, but he could marry both Crow and White Cockatoo, for he was "one self" (a law unto himself) "spirits of long time ago" He told them all that *janga koora wenyuk* made these laws and gave them to him. He is supposed to have propagated all the birds, he was *mootchoo, goongabula, mata walla walluk, yoonbula* (which means that he married his sisters, daughters, nieces, etc.)

Amongst the subdivisions of *Manitchmat* and *Wordungmat* in the Eastern districts, York, Beverley, etc., there were a few *waljuk* or *walj borungur*, <sup>eaglehawk totem brothers</sup> and the old people amongst these invariably pointed eastward as the place from where their ancestors travelled, in *Nyitting, demma goomber, or koor-ra times* (*Nyitting* = ancestors, <sup>or ancestral, or cold times</sup> *demma goomber* = great grandparents, *koorra* = a long time ago.) All *waljuk* are *Meening* people, that is, inland people. (Meening, meening, also mean eastern - York, etc. and "people" *yirgilia meening* - Eucla people.)

Throughout the greater part of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, the two names Eaglehawk and Crow represent the two principal class divisions, and most of the myths and legends relate to the actions of these two birds, who are the leading characters in native tradition. Here in the Southwest, the Eaglehawk has no modern tribal or class significance. It was the inherited totem/ <sup>(borungur)</sup> of several families inhabiting the districts of York, Beverley, Northam and places further east, and it is one of the class totems of Boorong and Kaimera (fathers and sons in the North), but if it ever formed one of the principal class divisions, it was at a period so remote that all record of such is obliterated from the memory of the oldest inhabitants whose totem is the eaglehawk. One old woman men-



tioned that she had heard that "long ago", when the waljuk eaglehawk people first came they always "married self (they were mata walla (all mixed up) walluk), that is, a Waljuk man married a Waljuk woman, and that is why the Waljuk are all gone now."

Except in the districts named, the eaglehawk is not an inherited family or local totem, but it occasionally forms an individual totem in other parts of the Southwest.

A new and interesting question arises in this connection. Were the Manitchmat a distinct migration that came in contact with the eaglehawk and crow people at some point in what is now West Australia, and if so, where was the point of contact, and by what route did the Manitchmat arrive? Did they come by sea, and from some point on the Nor'West coast? The Manitch have always spoken of themselves as sea coast people, "belonging to the sea", waddandee, sea people, Tondarup (fair people), Didarruk (deedara = the sea), etc., yet they were entirely ignorant of the art of navigation, and had not even the primitive log canoes/<sup>mangrove rafts, logs</sup> of the Nor'West natives.

It is in the Southwest corner also, that the closest affinity with the Dravidian language is to be found, yet the Dravidians were a dark type, and were comparatively recent arrivals. In the Capel, Vasse and more southern districts of the Southwest coast, the Manitchmat physique is <sup>more clearly</sup> distinct from the Wordungmat, and here occurs also a dialectic difference somewhat more pronounced than in the other parts of the Southwest. The "doonan wangee" (doonan speech obtained from Baaburgurt, a Vasse Manitchmat) shows this difference. It is supposed to have been spoken by the kweecam - swamp hen. Another dialect called "doona kom'ma" was also spoken about Cape Leeuwin, but had become extinct with the people who spoke it.

A faint tradition was extant amongst the Vasse natives concerning some old families who were once resident in what are now the Sussex, Williams and Kojonup districts, who were called yarruragur, light or fair haired people. These people were "very tall, light coloured and strong", with well-rounded limbs, and spoke the Doonan wangee and doona komma dialects.



Many legends of mythical ancestors centre round the South-west corner, some of which are extremely vague. Kootijkum or kootijbung was a mythical being, who travelled along the coast between Kwarramup (Cape Leeuwin) and Balbardup (Albany) going no further than these two points. Baabur stated that his grandfather told him that Kootijkum had named the four classes, Ballarruk, Nagarnook, Tondarup and Didarruk.

He gave all the coastal natives their oobarri (totems), giving his own name to some of them. Tradition states that kootijkum was a yung'ar (man) in demma goomber (great grandfather) times, between Kwarramup (Cape Leeuwin) and Balbardup (Albany), Kootijkum was always a yungar (man).

There was only one kootijkum alive in the 1900's, a man named Wee-jang, living at Busselton, and he died before any information could be obtained from him.