FURTHER NOTES ON BURIAL CUSTOMS, AUSTRALIA.

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In previous numbers of this journal[1] I have reported some peculiar burial customs and stones used in magical ceremonies by the Australian aborigines. As the subject has been well received, I beg to submit some additional information obtained by me during a number of years when visiting the Darling River between Brewarrina and Menindee.

I have before described the so-called "widows' caps" and oval balls of kopai, placed upon native graves. Another emblem of mourning sometimes found at aboriginal burying places in the Darling Valley was made as follows: A quantity of burnt gypsum, ground fine and mixed with sand or ashes, to which water was added, and the whole worked into a somewhat coniform cylindrical mass about a foot or fifteen inches long. The large end, or base, of the cylinder, was sometimes elliptical and sometimes approximately circular, having the major diameter from about 5 up to 8 inches, which gradually diminished till near the other end, or apex, which was rounded off like the end of an immense egg. See Fig. 1. In the basal end a deep recess was made, reaching back 6 or 8 inches, and in the largest examples more than a foot, into the middle of the cylinder, resembling in shape the interior of an immense wine glass or goblet. The great depth of this cavity in proportion to its diameter, and its conical shape shows that these articles were not suitable for head ornaments.

The largest example of this sort of article which has yet come under my notice is one in my own private collection, illustrated in the accompanying drawing. Unfortunately, the smaller end was broken off before it was found, leaving the specimen open at both extremi-

[1] Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc., Vol. 48, pp. 1–7, 313–318, and 460–462, with illustrations.

ties, with a cylindrical cavity reaching right through it, like a piece of drain-pipe. The thickness of the shell is irregular, being greatest near the base and middle of the shaft, where it is in places about two inches, thinning out to intermediate thicknesses down to less than half an inch at other portions. The outside of the wall or shell

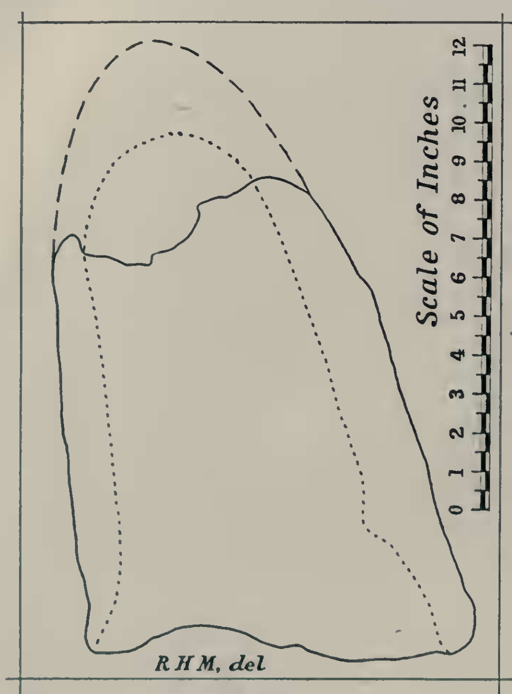

FIG. 1. Mourning emblem.

of the cylinder in its present damaged state is 13½ inches, but in its original state it probably measured about 16 inches, as indicated by broken lines in the drawing.

At the base, which is only slighly damaged, the longest diameter of the cavity or funnel is 8¾ inches, and the shortest 6 inches. The corresponding internal diameters of the orifice at the smaller end are 5½ and 4¾ inches respectively. The outside measurement of the circumference at the base is 28¾ inches and a similar outside measurement at the smaller end is 23 inches. The original circumference has evidently been a good deal reduced by the wasting away

of the outer surface by the weather and wind-blown sand, during many years of exposure.

For the purpose of more fully illustrating this exceptionally large specimen, I have introduced a photograph, Fig. 2, which shows the base or larger end of it, with a view right through the hollow interior to the other extremity. Near the distal end of the funnel

FIG. 2. Mourning emblem. View through the interior.

shaped cavity there is a discolored streak in the wall or shell, which can be seen in the photograph. Such a mark could have been caused by a stoppage of the work or additional material, which was not quite of the same shade along the joining line. There is a thin, irregularly shaped patch on the outside of the cylinder, which was evidently put on after the main trunk had been completed, either to secure a uniformly rounded contour or to remedy some defect in the original structure.

When the specimen was discovered, it was lying in the position shown in Fig. 2, with all the lower part embedded in the sandy bank of Lake Tongo, and had apparently lain in that position for a long time. The upper half, from *a* right back to the other end, was fully exposed to the weather for many years, and is consequently

much diminished in thickness by disintegration. It is much the thinnest part of the shell, being in places less than half an inch thick. The lower half of the photograph represents the thickest part of the shell from the front to the rear.

My specimen was found on Tongo Station, near Lake Tongo, which flows into the Paroo River. Tongo is in the county of Fitzgerald, in the northwestern portion of New South Wales, about 80 miles north-northeast from Wilcannia, and is approximately in latitude 30° 30′ and longitude 143° 40′.

A somewhat similar specimen to that illustrated, but smaller, was found some years ago a few miles northwest from Tilpa, Darling River, and is now in a private collection to which I was allowed access. I had not time to make a complete drawing, but I took the following measurements. Complete outside length from base to apex, 12½ inches. The cavity in the base occupies the whole of the interior of the article, extending back in a conical form for 9 inches. The longer diameter of the orifice at the base is 7¾ inches, and the shorter 7 inches. There are no marks of a net on the inner wall and it is improbable that such ever existed. The circumference at the base, outside measurement, is 30 inches. The shell is somewhat thin throughout, ranging from a quarter to three quarters of an inch thick, until near the top of the cone, where it is about 3 inches in thickness. Like my own specimen, it has been reduced in size by exposure to the weather.

Another specimen which I have seen is a solid conical mass of kopai about ten inches long and six inches in diameter at the base or larger end. In the base is a shallow concavity, the depth of which is only about an inch and three quarters, without any indication of the marks of a net. Such an article could not be worn on one's head, because unless it were kept continually balanced, it would fall off. Its great weight would also be prohibitive. In my opinion, both this and the last described specimen, were not intended for wear, but were made for the purpose of being deposited upon graves by the relatives of the parties interred. This was done immediately after the burial, whereas the widow's cap was not deposited till the termination of her period of mourning.

As regards the purpose of articles such as that now illustrated, it is hard to obtain full particulars, because they are not used by the remnants of the tribes now living on the Darling River. It is not likely that they have been worn on the head, like the "widows' caps" described by me last year,[2] because the opening in some of them is too small to fit any adult skull, whilst others are too large and heavy. The great depth of the hollow—13 inches in my specimen—would be needless as a receptable for the head; and there are no impressions of a net on the inner wall similar to those found on "widows' caps." An old black fellow whom the white people called "Jimmy," a head man of the Ngunnhalgu tribe, who resided most of his later years at Marra Station, on the Darling, and who died about ten years ago, said the articles with the deep cavities were not worn on the head, but were laid upon the graves of old men and women of tribal importance, in the same way that the kopai balls were deposited.[3]

Mr. J. E. Suttor writes me as follows:

> In 1880, while mustering cattle on the back part of Curranyalpa run, I came across two old black men and a woman camped at a waterhole. They had shifted out from the Darling river to hunt opossums for the skins. The old woman was lying in the camp very sick. A few days later the two black fellows passed my camp, which was about five miles from their own, and told me the old woman had died. Going that way a copule of days afterwards I found the grave on a pine ridge close by the camp I had previously seen, and upon it were lying two hollowed kopai articles somewhat resembling widows' caps. At the place where the camp fire had been was a piece of bark, with the remains of kopai plaster upon it, together with some lumps of kopai, burnt and ready to break up, if more had been required.

The woman's husband and the other man, who was probably a relative, had each left a token of their sorrow upon the grave before they went away.

It is well known that human skulls were used as water vessels by the aborigines in several parts of Australia. Mr. E. J. Eyre saw some drinking cups of this sort, and gives an illustration of one.[4] The tribes referred to by Mr. Eyre adjoined the Darling River

[2] Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc., Vol 48, pp. 316–318, Figs. 5 and 6.

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 313–315, Figs. 1 to 4.

[4] *Journs. Expeds. Discov. Cent. Aust.* (London, 18—), Vol. 2, pp. 310, 316 and 511, plate IV., fig. 20.

people on the west. When surveying on the Darling and Paroo Rivers in 1884–5, I met an old black fellow who had a skull among his paraphernalia, which he used for drinking purposes on ceremonial occasions. Old "Jimmy," already quoted, told me that in addition to their use as mourning emblems, the kopai articles were imitation skulls which the spirits of the dead were supposed to use for their water supply in that arid district.

In Fig. 1, which is drawn to scale, the firm or continuous line represents the exterior of the article in its present state, viewed from the side. The broken line at the top of the drawing indicates the supposed form when first manufactured. The dotted line shows the limit of the internal cavity, if the shell were transparent and one could see through it. The total length of the article, outside, by the assumed restoration, is 16 inches; and the depth of the internal hollow space, as restored, is about 13 inches. No impressions or marks of a net are visible upon any part of the inner wall.

The present weight of the article is just a little over 15 pounds. At a moderate estimate, the portion broken off would weigh about 3 pounds, making the weight of the complete article about 18 pounds. Then we must take into consideration that the whole outside surface has suffered by disintegration during many years' exposure to the weather. The same would apply to the inside surface of the cavity, though in a lesser degree. The original weight has also been diminished by the drying of the material in the sun for such a long period. The reduction in the weight due to the two combined causes mentioned is difficult to estimate; but judging by the worn and contracted appearance of many parts of the surface, I think 2 pounds could be allowed for it. This would bring the total weight of the article, when it left the maker, up to about 20 pounds.

Conclusion.

Before concluding this paper, it has been thought desirable to supply a few additional remarks respecting my three previous articles on ceremonial stones and burial customs, published in the Proceedings of this Society, Vol. 48, pp. 1–7, 313–318 and 360–362. When the present article is perused in conjunction with the three

papers quoted, the reader will have a fairly complete account of the customs dealt with.

Magic Stones.—In regard to the ceremonial or magic stones, old "Harry Perry," the black fellow already quoted, tôld me that among other uses, these stones were employed for bringing rain, and this statement was repeated by old "Jimmy," of Marra Station, and by other old blacks. An old man took one of these talismans and placed it in the fork of a tree, several feet from the ground, in such a way that the saucer-shaped depression in the base was uppermost. He then sat down and sang the usual rain-producing song, after which he went away to his camp. It was necessary that great secrecy should be observed, because if any person saw the operation it would be a failure.

Some of these magic stones were used for bringing "dust-storms" which are very common in that arid part of New South Wales, in which case the procedure was the same as for rain, excepting that the song was differently worded. Moreover, a stone to produce "dust-storms" was reddish in color, like those numbered 1 to 4 in Fig. 2, Vol. 48, p. 462.

It must be explained that the country along the valley of the Lower Darling and northward from that river to the Queensland boundary, comprises many large stretches of red-colored, sandy soil, upon which very little grass or herbage grows. When a strong gale sweeps over this district in a dry season, it disturbs the loose soil, and separates from it vast quantities of fine, reddish dust, which rise and darken the air like a fog, which is sometimes so dense that one cannot see more than a few yards in any direction. Such visitations are known as "dust-storms," and are also facetiously spoken of as "Darling showers."

On the approach of a "dust-storm," kangaroos, emus, etc., hurry away to the scrubs and timbered places, where they are in the habit of taking shelter in wet weather and in times of danger. The blacks are aware of this practice of the animals, and when they think a "dust-storm" is coming, a couple of men go away and hide themselves in one of these scrubs. Two or more scrubs may be manned in the same way. The hunters place themselves

in such a position that when the animals come moping about in the fogginess caused by the dense clouds of dust, they can be speared or clubbed without difficulty. When a "dust-storm" was wanted for hunting purposes, a man who had a reddish or dust-colored ceremonial stone, took charge of the function.

Another use of a "dust-storm" was to obliterate the foot-marks of men or animals. A party who had been out on a marauding or murdering expedition, would bring up a "dust-storm" to prevent their enemies from following their tracks. Or a party of hunters could be frustrated in their operations if an adverse conjurer brought up a "dust-storm."

Mr. Tobin, who has lived a long time in the Darling district, tells the following. During a very dry time at Enngonia, on the Warrego River, a few old black fellows were camped on the bank. They were believed to possess the paraphernalia requisite for performing all the supernatural feats professed by a medicine man. One day a stockowner and one or two of his friends visited the camp, and asked the black fellows how it was that they did not bring a downpour of rain. He jocularly said that he would give so much flour and tobacco to any of the old natives who could break up the drought. One of them, called "Gurara Charlie," who was very anxious to take advantage of the offer, talked the matter over with his fellow conjurers, but it transpired that the stone which he possessed was only a *dust*-producing implement. One of the other blacks, "Jimmy Kerrigan," said that he had the right sort of stone for making *rain,* and he undertook the job for the promised reward. He was, unfortunately, not successful on that occasion, but attributed his failure to the malignity of an adverse conjurer who lived somewhere down the river.

When the stones were used for producing an abundant supply of nardoo, or other grass seeds, or for the increase of game, as stated at page 7, Vol. 48, the words of the incantation sung by the old performer were varied to suit the case. Moreover, when it was thought that enough rain had fallen, the magic stones were employed for bringing about fine weather. And when it was desired to prevent a "dust-storm" from rising, or to shorten its

duration, these charms were likewise in requisition, with a suitable accompaniment.

Widows' Caps.—Although a widow's head-dress invariably consisted of a cap similar in shape to those illustrated at pages 316–317, Vol. 48, they were also worn by a woman for an adult son or daughter, or for a favorite brother or sister. Their use was not restricted to the women only. Old "Marra Jimmy," already quoted, said that men sometimes wore such a cap in mourning for their mothers, mother's sisters, their own elder sisters, their wives and other blood relatives of mature years. Generally speaking, however, the men used the kind of articles described in this paper, which were never worn on the head, but were deposited at the grave.

The facts just narrated would account for the comparatively large numbers of so-called "caps" which have been found on individual graves. Mr. T. Worsnop mentions four found on a grave, one of which weighed fourteen pounds.[5] A friend writes me that he has seen five caps similarly used. A station owner on the Darling River informs me that many years ago there was an aboriginal grave not far from his homestead, which had nearly a dozen articles which appeared to him to be caps, lying upon it. They were not all of one size, but comprised some very large ones, others of medium size, whilst others were smaller. In the cases just mentioned it is likely that some were widow's caps; some had possibly been worn by men; whilst others were manufactured as tributes of mourning. The latter kind could be placed upon the grave as soon as the body was buried, whereas a "cap" could not be deposited till the wearer's term of mourning had expired.

The "widow's cap" illustrated in a former article (p. 316, Vol. 48), is made from kopai, with only a small mixture of sand or ashes, because kopai is abundant over a large portion of the Darling valley. But on some of the tributaries of the Darling, such as the Macquarie, Mara, Bogan, etc., where gypsum is found only in small quantities, the mourning caps are made out of a brown-colored tenacious mud, obtained from the bottoms of waterholes and streams, without any admixture of gypsum. Yellow or reddish

[5] "Aborigines of Australia" (Adelaide, 1897), p. 62.

clay, sometimes found cropping out on the slopes of ridges, or banks of watercourses, was also utilized for the same purpose. The shape of the cap was the same, no matter what the material consisted of. Clay caps, when removed from the head, and exposed to the weather on a grave, soon became disintegrated and fell to pieces; hence none of the caps of this material have been preserved by the white people.

White is the favorite color for mourning among the Australian aborigines, but when it cannot be obtained other colors must be substituted for it. It is perhaps needless to add that a cap of any sort, whether made of kopai or mud, and whether worn by a man or a woman, was removed during sleeping hours. It was also left in camp when the wearer, of either sex, was away in search of food, or while doing any kind of work.

PARRAMATTA, N. S. WALES, March 5, 1910.