

Of the diversity of dialects, they have a tradition that when an old woman named Wurruri died, the various nations assembled, and one tribe ate her flesh and others ate her intestines, and they all thus acquired different dialects. Certainly nothing here indicates the dispersion of Babel.

On Nurundere's removal, he left his son behind. On discovering this, he threw his spear to him with a line attached. The son thus succeeded in reaching his father, and this line is the way the dead reach Nurundere, who provides men with wives, and converts old men into young ones; therefore they have no fear of the future. Some of the legends are very obscene.

They have curious legends about animals. They conceive the turtle and the snake exchanged the venomous fangs. A battle took place between the pelican and the magpie about fish; in the struggle the magpie was rolled in the ashes and the pelican became besmeared with scales of the fish, and so had white breasts. They believe in two Wood Demons; the one assumes any shape, sometimes an old man, then a bird, to lure individuals into his reach that he may destroy them.

The noise on the Lake of Alexandrina is very remarkable, and the cause was long undiscovered. Of course it is attributed by the blacks to a water spirit. It is heard with a booming sound, resembling distant cannon or an explosive blast, at other times like the falling of a heavy body in the water. This now is known to be caused by a bird.

The cave figures are very remarkable, and seem to puzzle every writer on their origin or use. It is very probable they were connected in some way with religious observances, which the natives are very unwilling to divulge.

These figures and others cut in rocks are found in several parts of Australia, thus doing away with the supposition that they may have been the production of strangers who have landed on portions of the shore, as figures have been found on the eastern shores by Sir George Grey, and also near Sydney, not only on rocks but on trees. How many of these have been engraven on hard rocks with the want of suitable implements it is difficult to divine.

Sir George Grey's description of some of these is remarkable, a rough sketch of one of which I subjoin, being a figure painted on the roof of caves. This figure is painted on a black ground so as to produce a stronger effect, and covered with the most vivid red and white; its head encircled with bright red rays inside a broad stripe of brilliant red, crossed by lines of white, and then crossed again with narrow stripes of deeper red; the face painted white, the eyes black, surmounted by red and yellow lines; the body and hands outlined with red, the body being curiously painted with red stripes and bars. The dimensions were—head and face, 2 feet; width of face, 17 inches; length from bottom of face to navel, 2 feet 6 inches.

There were other paintings in the cave vividly coloured—one with four heads, joined together with a necklace, but having no mouths, and good-looking, executed on a white ground. Length, 3 feet 6 inches; breadth across two upper parts, 2 feet 6 inches; lower heads, 3 feet 1½ inch.

There were several other paintings of singular character—one being a disc representing a kangaroo as an offering to number one; also spears thrown at some unknown object; the impress of a hand; an arm in the black wall, so as to appear extended round some one in the cave, inviting him to some more concealed mysteries.

In another cave, approached by steps, until they reached a central elevated stone slab, supporting a slab to uphold the roof, was a seat at the extremity. The principal figure was that of a man 10 feet 6 inches in length, clothed from the chin downwards in a red garment reaching to the feet, the hands and feet being painted of a deeper red; the face and head were enveloped in a succession of circular bandages or rollers.

These were vividly coloured yellow and white; the eyes were alone represented on the face, no nose nor mouth. On the bandages were a rolled series of lines, painted in red, regularly done, as if to indicate some meaning. Its feet reached just in front of the natural seat, while its head and face stared grimly down on the floor of the cavern. There were numerous figures of kangaroos, emus, turtles, snakes, &c., on the sides of the cave.

From the appearance of grease on the roof just over the seat, Sir Geo. Grey conjectures that at certain times some doctor or chief man sits there, and that the cave is resorted to in cases of disease or witchcraft; footsteps were seen about the place. The figures are remarkable; the rays of the sun, as we may suppose, emanating from the head, would lead to the belief of the worship of Baal, the God of Fire; while some of the names of the tribes partly support this idea, such as Binbal, Pundyil, &c., &c., &c.

The other figures are clothed from head to foot. This is singular, as the natives have no such garments, their opossum cloak having no sleeves, and not reaching to the feet as here described.