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SOCIAL ORGANISATION

A general outline, in note form.

NOTES ON SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Individual relationship and group relationship include each other. Motherhood is individual, not group; marriage is individual, not group; mourning for the husband is individual, not group. Describe the relation between man and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters.

The family is analogous to the European family.

The aborigine discriminates from early childhood between his actual and tribal mothers, brothers, sisters - one bag, one womb. The aboriginal family and group must be intimately lived with and familiarized for years before its peculiarities can be absorbed, and one must hear, in familiar everyday routine, the terms of address etc. between members of the individual family, the relationships embraced by the term "family".

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It is only when a man has picked up the wrong woman that she may be taken from him. The individual family and its expansion into the group is original, the mixed and apparently group marriages are innovations - they are not found in tribes uncontaminated by intercourse with whites.

The economic unity of the family, the division of labor within it, legal sanction of its marriages etc.

Rules and laws extend throughout family and group life, and regulate all social relations, Premature grey hair, skin diseases, etc. result from breaking the law, avoidance of brother and sister, and other laws which if broken bring ridicule on the offenders. Bone pointing for serious offences or fights or avenging parties (describe these). There are established punishments for breaches of established rules. There is the traditional law and traditional punishment, tribal or magic - the old men are the keepers of traditional laws and use physical or magical means to punish serious breaches.

No chiefs

Bone pointing is dealt with by the elders, in death or avenging cases. Breaches of marriage laws.

These traditional rules and punishments may justly be termed legal. They are not actions arising from local or personal acts of violence etc.

The man who charms a woman has to keep in mind that she must be the daughter of a maternal uncle and paternal aunt. In this case his brothers will support him as they may need support similarly later. Other circumstances must be taken into account. If a man ate food handled by his mother-in-law or by those (P.4) who operated on him at his initiation, or ate forbidden food or cohabited with a woman before his manhood was completed.

If the boys cried during initiation their mothers or sisters would die. If they spoke or ran about their wound would not heal.

If a woman returned to camp with her newborn baby before the allotted time - a week in some tribes, longer in others - she and her man are held up to ridicule and the child ^{or} and woman dies.

In late stage of pregnancy the woman has a shelter to herself.

If a man speaks to his mother-in-law or in some tribes if he or she walk in each other's tracks her hair will go grey and the man will go bald.

All ceremonies are performed according to traditional custom.

Early marriages amongst the males were not allowed. The ceremonials gave opportunity in the relaxation of rules to young men's passions.

Betrothals occurred before birth in many cases. Elopement was not always punished by death except in sister and brother elopements. In other cases the man might fight for the girl he eloped with - extenuating circumstances were taken into consideration, or a previous breach of law connected with the girl's family.

Methods of obtaining wives :

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In only two places were boys and girls betrothed where real first cousin marriages took place.

In elopements a sister had to be given in exchange, the father and mother of the betrothed girl receiving payment for her. They must keep her for her betrothed man, but should the betrothed man dally in claiming the girl and someone else takes her, there is a fight between the tribal brothers and either a sister of the girl is given in exchange or her brothers find another tribal sister for the betrothed man. The girl's father and mother support her betrothed umari.

Wives may be stolen and women elope.

A man if a good hunter may get many wives which he can exchange with less skilful brother hunters. These exchanges are honorably carried out. An elder brother may give some of his younger sisters in exchange, but this presupposes that there has been no previous betrothal. The most common form of betrothment is by the mother's brother. The infant has no say in her betrothal. Murna-ambula gave Thallara to Winwirdi. (Yugarn, a bright piece of mica, will charm.) A spearing duel sometimes decides an elopement.

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A woman would be beaten by her female relatives when brought back or when encountered after her elopement.

There are three modes of obtaining wives in every area - betrothment in infancy, elopement or stealing. All the gifts bestowed by the prospective son-in-law go to the child's parents and elder brothers. The infant was betrothed perhaps to an elderly man who was old when she reached the age of puberty. Elopement with a younger "brother" of the man often followed, in which case either her brothers held duels with the young man or terms were arranged with her betrothed husband. An elderly man will give one of his wives to a nephew.

The widow of a man went to his brother, elder or younger; if no brother were living, then the girl's elder brothers exchanged her for a wife for one of them. The girl, as will be seen, has no choice.

A hitch might come in the betrothals through the family giving the girls when her husband's family do not have any girls to give in exchange.

Infant betrothals were combined with exchange of sisters.

A man might secure a wife in exchange for his sister's daughter (niece) or his daughter in certain cases.

In some tribes the mother had an equal say with the father in the betrothal of their infant, in others the father, and in others the mother's brother.

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All marriages were marriages by purchase.

In the Roebourne and Twilight Cove areas true first cousin marriages were the rule, in all other marriages tribal first cousins.

Sometimes the uncle took the girl for himself and again a man may run away with a woman and have to give her back later on. Capture of a woman or women is effected by raiding parties. The captured woman or women are the prizes of the victors, but in all cases the degree of kindred must be straight. An uncle may get a niece or a nephew an aunt and even a grandmother, provided she is not mother's mother. Only hostile tribes captured each other's women and the man cannot keep a woman belonging to a forbidden class.

Charming by mica or bits of shiny substance, polished obsidianites, pearlshell (though the white shining of these is a panacea against magic), bits of personal property belonging to the man and left near the woman charm her. In the Kimberley and other areas the charming object was sung to by the charmer. Umaji belonged to old Amungurra and Pussy took her, then she was got back again and Pussy with a brother again took her. Gauera was taken by Pompey.

An illegal marriage can always be detected in camp. I must always be remembered that the aborigines' primitive ideas were circumscribed. They settled all these matters in their primitive way - by "relationship" - but that simple way has been (P.8) camouflaged by superficial observers or by trained observers investigating tribes contaminated and corrupted by white influence. Natives who under the safety of white settlement marry the wrong woman in their tribes and groups bring certain terms to bear upon these. Ngamminwuk etc.

The man always has to pay for the woman and when she is handed over to him he more or less continues the payment and thus is her absolute possessor.

A man who fed his in-laws well might be given many girls. One man had 20 - he was the best hunter and fisher of his group. The man's individual right to his woman is emphasised in all tribes, that is to the right woman, who has been betrothed or given to him by her father and mother, or her mother's brother and for whom he has been paying since the betrothal took place.

The formality of handing over the betrothed girl varied. Group

marriage is an innovation. The husband's individual right to his woman is known to tribe and group. It must always be remembered that the sexual rights are secondary. Marriage was more binding on the woman, but even if a man had several wives, the old ones amongst them worked for him and found food. Inyuin and Guyama, then Wombija and Kundhain, Kaiba and Thard... P. 9
Salvado's aboriginal beauty was taken by a wrong man - the tribe had already been corrupted by contact with the whites.

The woman if sexually useless was still economically useful but the period of individual marriage often lasted through life.

See Summary P. 66

The economic function of the wife, vegetable food and small ground game hunting, carrying surplus implements, water, baby, making the hut, finding firewood etc.

Camp quarrels - due to scandalmonging in many cases, also jealousy, bad temper, insufficiency of vegetable food supply. Men are jealous of their women but infinitely more so are women jealous of their men.

Balyari and Wonggur (Wonggur is now dead).

In extreme cases the woman's brothers protect her. A woman with many brothers is comparatively safe from desperately brutal treatment.

A woman takes the part of her husband.

Now if the betrothed girl grows up badly, a bad girl in fact, the man unless he has no other woman, may either go to the man or men she has committed herself with, or he may give her (his rights over her) to a brother, or he may refuse to continue feeding her and her people and so repudiate her.

His brothers avenge his wife's murder or her brothers if she has many and the man's and woman's group - the elders - sat in judgment upon him.

Karimu killed his woman and had to fly from the tribe.

Bad temper - Mundurr and Nyan ngauera, Murna ambula and Inyiga. Inyauji and Jungur. Illtreatment either for some dereliction of duty, or because the man was out of temper.

Always the man and the children have the most food.

There is affection, not only conjugal, but family (Adjungga and

her mother, Wirura and his father).

Mourning for the husband, length of time, religious period, silence of widow, her hair is cut off and she stays with her mother's people, throwing ashes on her head, sometimes cutting her head. Fear often inspires cruel selfcuttings. There must be loud mourning from all the women as well as the widow. There is always a feeling against those who do not mourn strongly, that they were only "a little sorry".

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Sexual aspect of marriage

If there were licence before marriage the operation performed on girls would not be necessary.

Marital rights belong to the husband.

Girls and women take their wannas.

A man may leave his wife in care of a brother who may or may not have intercourse with her.

Women beat each other through jealousy.

A bad (sexually bad) woman was denounced in all tribes by the other women.

Women must be faithful to their husbands except by the latter's cognisance and permission but the man is not under any obligation to be faithful to his wife.

I have not found examples of defloration of young girls by fathers but tribal brothers may at the girl's operation take her for a day or night.

Temporary rights - waliji, mallulu etc. do not interfere with the husband's individual rights - sexual licence is temporary and is paid for. No group marriage - families live grouped together, not Pirraura.

Birabira relationship.

All the children of a man's wife or wives are his children.

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Sexual jealousy is more pronounced in the females and sexual jealousy in both was strong, both in S.W. and N.W. and coastal peoples generally. The man is more jealous of the wrong woman he has got than the right woman. There is not much camp adultery. A man chastises his woman severely for this and may kill her,

break her ankle or knee - if she is wantonly inclined. It must always be remembered that no adultery can be hidden.

No knowledge of the physiological facts of birth. The idea of the supernatural begetting of children was common to all tribes. It was only through their knowledge of the whites and their flocks, the birth of halfcastes etc. that the natives acquired the knowledge of procreation. The sexual act in no tribe was held to bear upon childbirth.

The defloration of young girls, to widen the vagina and towards magical beliefs of the religious effects of the men deflowering the girl. The womb of the woman has its place in the giving at the ceremonies.

In all the ceremonies where sexual licence obtains the act is in interdependence with all the other exchange during the ceremonies. Nothing like the white man's sexual jealousy, customs, duties, ceremonial observances all have their say in this.

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The natives live nominally in families, father, mother, grandmother, children, each unit has its own ngura - the only group relations are family groups. This is the binding element - continuous daily contact - each family group is more or less apart from its neighbouring group.

The size of each family group - each father has his own waters and territorial area round those waters but all the group waters form a portion of the territory of the tribe of which each family group is a unit. This tribe has a common speech, a common term and common customs and authority. The tribe can traverse the tribal territory without hindrance. It is not land they claim as waters. A father would point out the various waters of his fathers to his children, Where he was born etc. The family groups keep to their inherited territories. Their ownership of these territories came in the first place from their totems. Their right could not be infringed without permission.

Special rights to quarry ochre etc.

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There are individual claims and group claims.

In the S.W. the groups were numerous also in the Kimberley coast and land. No one man can barter his waters.

See p. 143're boundaries tribes etc.

The land (totemic) strictly belongs to its totemists, these separate into small units and roam over the totemic area. All their traditions centre round their totem grounds. From within these grounds they get their babies, outside them the baby takes the totem seen near it when born or perhaps quickened.

The ranji of the N.W.

Invitations to swan, fish etc.

Orphaned country

North, south, east and west of their water the group go food hunting, only stopped by fear of unfriendly tribes. A ngadhari intruding on the ground was killed. When outer tribes visited they were mainly fed by the hosts, sometimes accompanying relatives. The possession of land was totemic. It was their ground, emu, malleehen, eaglehawk etc.

The degree of aggregation, the number of the local group was mainly determined by the food and water supply. All along the coastline this was so - groups were large, remained stationary longer and only moved as a group to friendly groups whose (P. 15) special totem was in its season. All along the dry river beds groups of one, two or more families will camp.

Their dwellings house the individual family. The old men will make a shelter apart, the young single men have also their special quarters.

A man's father and mother if very old might share his own hut. There was no set position in the hut where husband or wife slept. The man generally took the best part. The children (girls) slept near mother or grandmother, the boys near either father, grandfather or big brother. Boys go to the bachelor huts at an early age, girls remained with their mother.

There was no communism in camp cooking, only when women cooked some of their spokis at a fire built quickly behind a temporary shelter. These rabbits they divided and ate, cooking the remainder, to take to camp. Wirura's hut - his father, mothers, woman, sisters (old) brothers, uncles. The men old and young guard the women and children.

There isseeming promiscuity.

There were fixed rules in all camps - the families were in their own huts - and every man and woman knew his or her social place in the camp. Near blood relations camped close to each other, the more distant the relationship the further the camp, and always these distant relatives camped at the point from which they came. There was magic in every camp. Men could go in and out amongst their immediate females (wives, grandmothers) but did not intrude in other camps. Every child knows its own mother always.

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The sociologically trained ethnologist judges kinship according to preconceived theories, to knowledge of kinship of other races gained by theoretical knowledge. The blood relation of the mother.

The baby comes to the father or the mother's brother.

The children are the offspring of his women. They are all hers in their first years and until they reach the ages of nine or ten, then he gives them over for initiation.

In the Kimberleys the mother merely carries the child and nurses it. The spirit child follows the father only. In the S. the father sees a jurding or wana.

Fatherhood is not consanguinous but magical. It is a magical connection between the father and his child. His children are as much his property as his woman.

Parents' treatment of their children - children the cause of serious camp quarrels - children fed by everybody, that is, their relations, mothers and fathers grief at the loss of their children particularly boys - Ngunggulea and his boy, his emotion and actions when he thought Gurardu was drowned.

Kinship not consanguinity.

A girl cannot conceive (amongst the uncircumcised) without being operated on.

The great fault is the belief that the aborigines can think exactly or have definite exact meanings.

Their cohesion is dependable upon relationship only and not from chiefdom or governmental authority of any kind.

A tribe is an aggregation of family groups.

Group is an aggregation of families inter-related. There are neither elected nor hereditary chiefs.

These inter-related tribes and groups may often fight each other. Certain local words distinguish the locality of groups.

Dr. Scott Nind - 1826-29 - was the first to place on record the Australian system of kinship. His female descent system applied to the K.G.S. aborigines.

Only one walja legend showing a promiscuity of intercourse.

In almost every group until the whites came there was a surplus of females. In fights the women went to the conquerors.

The woman has no possessions though she is the man's chief possession after his waters and his totemic territory.

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The C.A. babies come from spirit stones of ancestors and are reincarnations of these, but there is no churinga looked for to the spot.

White men are the spirits of the dead.

Wonggur's koirdi went to her country to a spirit stone there.

There is a mystic tie between the child and its ancestral spirits.

Gurdigi is maalu dhugurr and his woman kallaia dhugurr and

Mungalyuru was Mingari dhugurr. Neither the father's nor the mother's. The child was quicked at Mingari water.

The ngargalula chooses its father's woman.

The mother plays a part during the initiation of her boys and in mourning and funerals.

All totemic and initiation ceremonies, all laws are handed down through the men. No hereditary "alcheringa".

Babies are in the whirlwind, in the moon etc.

Several ways in which a child may enter its mother but in all cases the child belongs to the woman's husband.

The mother decides the death of her newly born child, but infants were buried alive with their dead mothers.

The mother suckles the child for years, carrying the little girl, the father rarely carrying them. Care and affection towards

their children; never beat them - boys' characters alone prevent them from being close tyrants; elder brothers or fathers (P. 19) make toy boomerangs, but the boy is taken away from the parental control early and is placed in much more firm brotherly control. The children that escape being killed and eaten are much cared for. When children do wrong, a wordy admonition from either parent suffices to stop them. Thin tree roots make miniature spears, and the boy is taught how to throw them. Children who had lost their mother or father were looked after by brother or sister or niece or nephew. They are called "jidula", orphan. Sometimes a man will beat his wife for punishing a refractory child. The native children are not "naughty" and are far more tractable than the white children.

The father will not deny himself for his child but the mother will. Carrying their dead baby. (Grey's and Salvado's notes in re.) There is love, pride, affectionate attachment with both parents for their children.

Wonggamurra.

No difference in infanticide, boys or girls

leniency due to excessive fondness for their children. The boys must not be thwarted or frightened, they might become cowards. The husbands and father is more lenient, but if the child, boy or girl, is doing something that may bring magic punishment and if

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his mother cannot stop him a warning cry from the father is sufficient.

The mutual care of the children brings or cements the attachment between husband and wife.

The father's rule over his children ceased as soon as the boys were placed in the bachelors' camp and the girls were made ready for allotment.

The child is protected by natural feelings of love and care.

Yet fathers have in a sudden temper killed their little boys or girls - a puling child or a constantly fractious one runs a risk of being killed by his father. Girls marry young but boys must be fully fledged men over 30, with perhaps one jilbi (white hair). In the S.W. marriages were earlier for the boys.

Annuncle may give one of his older wives to a nephew or an elder brother may give one of his older women to a younger brother, or a brother with more than one young wife may divide them.

Boys are under supervision after they have been removed from their mothers' camps. They are taught spearing, kailee making, traditions, songs, totems etc. All single men camp together and the boys with them. Grass widowers if many may have their own wurlies

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and the single men and boys theirs. But these are always under observation by old men. These are the schools of the boys until and after their initiation. The game was shared by all the young single men. The boys early learn to hunt for themselves and very soon become independent. In the circumcised tribes marriage for men comes late - they live in bachelors' quarters until then. Women and girls make a fire of their own and stay by it during their periods.

Only when very young the boys go hunting with their mothers. When set apart there are little sisters who may accompany the boys hunting and may carry food and game for them from their mothers. There are always portions of the camp forbidden to women, also to young men. Never at too great distance for fear of attack. The boys (training) are under the immediate tuition of their seniors and all under the tuition of the elders.

Tribal brothers were the trainers and the elder brothers assume control and direction of their younger brothers - brothers and brothers-in-law are amongst them - as all the trainees are not brothers, also uncles and granduncles may be amongst the boys being trained.

The boys' fathers watch and superintend. There is always the strong bond of affection between boys and girls and their parents, even to and after the death of one or the other. Filial affection is strong and parental affection also. The grandmothers and mothers' sisters may be given a portion of the cooked baby - the grandparents, parents, uncles, even small brothers or sisters may name the child. At betrothals the names may be changed - Gray and the old woman proves the strong affection.

The hair of the dead man was cut and kept by his brothers, who cut off their own hair, also his widows, sisters, mothers,

grandmothers and children. The affection between brothers and sisters, notwithstanding their early separation, is a very strong one, particularly on the sister's side. The sisters and brothers play a big part during the initiation of young brothers, also at totemic ceremonies.

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Economics

The men are the meat hunters, the women vegetable and small game (reptiles etc.) hunters. The women build the huts, gather wood, bring water, gather fruits, seeds, roots, bark etc., weave string of fur, make net bags, etc. and the food is divided with the immediate family, either could fish. The man divides his big game. Very rarely are permanent dwellings built - men make scoops, women make digging sticks sometimes, carry firesticks. Men make weapons, women went in parties with their children, men went also in parties. Men cooked the big game, women may make headbands, necklaces etc. Women are the beasts of burden, also they may be messengers.

It is the economic value of the female more than her sexual value that is appreciated.

The women all know how to arrange their new wurlis.

They must have vegetable food.

The men will make mimbu, wana.

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A man may kill what he may not eat and give it to those to whom it is not tabu. When travelling the men spread out to hunt, the women also divide in their search for vegetable food and small game etc.

All the domestic work is done by the women.

The woman's work is never ceasing - the man's work is varied, exciting, but has no system, no regularity. It is the women who maintain the household. She who keeps up a regular supply of food.

Men must divide their big game.

Grinding stones carried by the women.

Storing of seeds etc.

The woman's work is compulsory for on it depends the support of her young family.

(Mogu etc.) It is in every tribe the compulsion of the weaker

sex by the stronger, and it is because of this by the intense economic value attached to women's work that the value of a wife or wives is enhanced.

There would be no family unity or economic unity without the mothers.

The duties of the man towards his parents-in-law he continues payment for his woman.

Individual property, Inheritance of tribal and totem waters. Ethnologists will see analogies to their theories.

The Aus. may be taken in the individual family sense as an ethnic unit, for the family is in all tribes. The individual family everywhere consists of three generations. (There is a kind of code of sexual morality, crime against which is punished.)

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Family affection, family ties come first.

The advent of the whites has made the individual families casual associations - men pick up any woman because of the dearth of women.

Land is a totem property.

The husband has to conform to rules.

There are definite punishments for certain offences and these punishments are legal, as the marriage is legal.

Rules obtain re the mode of living in the family.

The food division of labor.