10

Dhudhuroa songs

A number of short songs and cries were listed by R.H. Mathews in notes taken down from Ned Wheeler and recorded in NLA MS 8006/3/4.2, Notebook 6. The songs documented were accompanied by some detailed contextual information, which is presented here in full.

The information collected from Ned Wheeler later formed part of the description of the 'Wonggoa or Wongupka Ceremony' in Mathews (1904: 306–22), which was later reprinted in Mathews (1905a). This description, however, combines aspects of the initiation ceremony from the Yorta Yorta (see section 9.6) based on information from John Atkinson.

While Neddy Wheeler was clearly an important cultural figure and referred to in a number of sources, in common with many other Indigenous people of his time little reliable information on him remains. We do know that he was born around 1840 at Narragang in the Mitta Mitta district and died at Lake Moodemere in 1908, after often camping there over the years with other Aboriginal people, such as Tommy McRae – the well-known painter – and his brother Billy, and their friends and relations. His wife Charlotte died at Lake Tyers in 1908.

Mathews (1904: 306) stated that the 1904 description was 'an account of the initiation ceremonies of the native tribes who originally occupied that portion of the Upper Murray, Mitta Mitta, Kiewa, Ovens, King and Broken Rivers. These rites were also in force on the upper Goulburn, Yarra and Saltwater rivers'. This suggests that the features of the ceremony were similar across a wide part of Victoria. However, the songs that were sung on

those occasions would presumably have differed from language to language. The songs presented in this section are those collected from Ned Wheeler and presumed to be in Dhudhuroa language.

The list of songs and cries is summarised in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1: List of Dhudhuroa traditional songs

Text/ceremony	Contents	R.H. Mathews page reference	Section
Wanggo'a ceremony ('man-making')	A couple of short cries	34–35	10.1
Dyibbau ceremony (boy's initiation)	One short song (glossed)	36–37	10.2
Revenge	One short song (unglossed)	37–38	10.3

Source: R.H. Mathews, NLA MS 8006/3/4.2, Notebook 6; adapted by authors.

10.1 The Wanggo'a ceremony as told by Ned Wheeler

The Wanggo'a ceremony, also described as 'man-making', appears to have been one of at least two ceremonies related to the initiation of young men. It contains some short cries, uttered when the *tyibbauks*, presumably young men who are at a higher stage of initiation, come out 'with bark and boughs' and 'run into the camp', crying Oh! Oh Wa! Ho.

The full text relating to the ceremony is presented as Box 10.1:

Box 10.1: Dhudhuroa Wanggo'a ceremony

[p. 34]

Wanggo'a ceremony

Boy sits in mother's lap. A ring is made on the ground and boys put sitting in it on the grass. His mother is near him. The boys are then taken away into the bush, and a tooth taken out.

Kubbi marries Butha or Murri.

Kubbi is a porcupine. His father was Ippai, possum

mother was Kangaroo also whipsnake mother

Muddyigang is the bullroarer

Yirragaminnarnga, small roarer

After teeth out swing the roarer within hearing of boys

Smoke boys when bought in out of bush

sup. 36&37

Tyibbo – Ring hair off head except central line. Paint him. Boughs in belt all round. After all the men come home from hunting – The other men bring the jibbouk close & plant them. Some will be roasting others making [burn??]. [p. 35]

Wanggoa is name of man making. Nurmang is a man who is through Wanggoa

The tyibbauks come out with [furry??] bark and boughs run into camp. Oh! oh wa! ho. A tyibbo will catch a boy and [throw – crossed out] pretend to throw him into the water He will hit the bark and make sparks fly. He has a net over his shoulder. He will pick up any possum and put it in net bag. Expose arse to women & genitals also. For about a week continue. Then feed. They go and camp at ngoolooboolooo after jibbauk. After that they get a Koo scrotum & fill it with grass and sew it up with sinew.

See p.36

Source: R.H. Mathews, NLA MS 8006/3/4.2, Notebook 6, pp. 34–35; adapted by authors.

This specifically includes the cry 'Oh! oh wa! ho' that does not appear in Mathews (1904), although at the end of the ceremony, when the initiates have almost finished, Mathews (1904: 325) writes:

> He passes on to another camp where a man or woman will perhaps call out 'Tyibbauga! fetch me some water.' He answers, 'waho !' and taking the vessel offered to him, scampers off to the creek or water-hole and brings back a small quantity of water with dirt in it. The person refuses this, and then the novice goes and brings good water. Several different persons may make the same request, and be similarly responded to.

It is unclear whether this information relates specifically to the Dhudhuroa ceremony or has been generalised from information about a range of ceremonies held in different parts of Victoria. (For a further discussion of the problems in Mathews's (1904) and (1905a) description of this ceremony, see section 9.6.1.)

The description of the Wangg'oa ceremony in Box 10.1 is followed by the description of 'Making young women'. Ned Wheeler was also the informant for this. There are no songs or cries given here, and we include this as Box 10.2 primarily because transcriptions of this information may not have been published before.

Box 10.2: Dhudhuroa 'Making young women'

Making young women – N. Wheeler

Put girl up a sapling & put green bushes under over in smoulding fire & smoke her. About 10 feet high old women do it. They camp with the girl for a couple of days and smoke her at the finish. Paint girl with possum's fat & raddle. Put apron her dyabēng, put strings around arms, made of fur [& skin – inserted] of the ringtail possum. Cut skin in thin slices & twist, with the fur on it. He has a snake, a sleing (blue tongue) lizard. After a young woman has her first child, she and her babe are smoked.

Source: R.H. Mathews, NLA MS 8006/3/4.2, Notebook 6, p. 35; adapted by authors.

10.2 The Dyibbau ceremony as told by Ned Wheeler

A second ceremony related to initiation, but which seems to refer to a later stage than Wanggo'a is the Dyibbau ceremony. The word *Dyibbau* is clearly related to the word *Jibauk*, referred to in connection with initiation in the Djadjawurrung tribe (see section 2.3.2).

The description of the Dhudhuroa Dyibbau ceremony also includes a short song that names Dharramulan, a mythological creature well known in New South Wales.[1] He was male and the son of Baiame, the creator. Dharramulan is also referred to in one of the songs in the Yorta Yorta initiation ceremony reported in John Atkinson's statement (see section 9.6).

The full text of the Dyibbau ceremony, as told by Ned Wheeler, is presented in Box 10.3:

Box 10.3: Dhudhuroa Dyibbau ceremony

[p. 36]

Dyibbau ceremony – Ned Wheeler

He carries a guralie or shield. He drags some of the things on the ground. He carries a piece of green stick about 4 feet long. In passing a camp he will throw a sleepy lizard or a snake in among the women, who scatter in all directions. They mix up *strukes* mushroom, shit, & mix it & throw among the people. He comes along pretending to cry & people come out & he throws filth at them

The last of it, all the women & girls will be swimming in the river. He comes with a bush close to them till within reach. He lets go the bough and dives under a girl & all the girls run away. Some old men bring them spears pretending they think some wild man has attacked them.

1 See for example, Wikipedia, 'Daramulam', accessed 25 July 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daramulum; and Dharug and Dharawal Resources, 'Biiami', accessed 25 July 2017, dharug.dalang.com.au/plugin_wiki/page/Biiami.

At conclusion the gibbouks go into the water and wash themselves		
At man making – a figure of Dharamula on the ground in bark & painted – a bullroarer lying on top. All the men dance and sing the following song:–		
[p. 37]		
In Dhudhuroa tribe		
	cover a little	
Dharamulan	ngun'ninga-wa,	ye! ye! ye!
shoving		
nundhannga		

Source: R.H. Mathews, NLA MS 8006/3/4.2, Notebook 6, pp. 36–37; adapted by authors.

In the 1904 article, Mathews gives another version of this song (1904: 318) with some more detail:

> Lying on the top of the human figure are two real bullroarers, one being the muddyigang or larger kind, and the other the yirraga-minnunga, which is supposed to be the wife of Muddyigang. The novices are brought up and shown the image of Dharamulan, with his two descriptions of bullroarers, and are invited to carefully observe them. The men then dance round and sing:-
>
> Dharamulan ngunning-a-wa
>
> Nundhunna, yen! yeh! yeh!
>
> After this exhibition, the youths are warned against revealing anything which has been said or done in the bush, under terrible penalties seized with fearful maladies from which it is impossible to recover.

Using the Blake and Reid system of regularisation, employing voiced consonants, and assuming that Mathews's glosses are correct, we suggest the following analysis of this song, presented as example (10.1):

(10.1)	*Dharamulan*	*ngun'ninga-wa,*	*ye! ye! ye!*	*nundhannga*
		cover a little		*shoving*
	dharramulan	**ngunging(g)a-wa**	**ye! ye! ye!**	**nundhana**
	PN	cover-?	ONOM	shove

'Covering the (image) of Dharramulan, *Ye! Ye! Ye!*, Shoving …'

10.3 Revenge ceremony and song

In addition to the two texts relating to initiation, Ned Wheeler also wrote about the processes followed when a revenge party headed out. This description also includes a short song that is, unfortunately, not glossed by Mathews. The text of the story including the song is presented as Box 10.4:

Box 10.4: Dhudhuroa Revenge ceremony

[p. 37]

Revenge – N Wheeler

Gūr're or killing an enemy. They mark a tree. A party is picked and starts away and mark at tree at first camp Spit at the tree as they dance round & sing

"Wūre Bunningandha [urru – crossed out] [dumbu – inserted] balladha"

Mark a tree every night wherever they camp. A couple of scouts go on to locate the enemy. A couple of fellow go up to the victim and attack him with spears. His wives are also forbidden to flee. They hack pieces of skin off his buttocks and down to his knees, from the shoulders – in short all his back. Take his kidney fat also.

That night at camp of victors they cut the skin & flesh into smaller pieces & divide among kindred of [diccans??] also his friends. The hands were mostly cut off the victim also.

The last night before the murder, they make a little mia by putting green boughs on end, boughs end up, with a bough terminating it. Small pieces of wood were put on the fire under this cover. Men danced round this all night – about half danced while other half slept and changed about. A tree also marked being the last tree.

Doubled a dead body up. Dug a hole in sand, with a ledge in one side. Lay the body on its side with head toward sunrise, and fill it

– heap it up a couple of feet above the ground.

– He took a message stick about 2 feet long and about 2 inches wide to muster for the gurē' marked with devices with possum tooth & painted with red ochre. White stone – emu bones & kangaroo bones nicely marked.

Source: R.H. Mathews, NLA MS 8006/3/4.2, Notebook 6, pp. 37–38; adapted by authors.

A suggested regularisation of the song is presented as (10.2), together with the original text:

(10.2) *Wūre Bunningandha dumbuballadha*
wurre banhingandha d(h)ambabaladha

Notes

The first word is perhaps the word for 'sorcerer', written by Mathews as *wurrāwe* (NLA MS 8006/8/227), regularised by Blake and Reid as **warrawe**, but for which we suggest **wurrawe/wurre**, based on the form here. The presence of the word for 'sorcerer' in a song of this type would seem to be appropriate. It is possible that this word is also connected with the word for 'moon' **wurrayu**.

It may be that the third word is **dhumbaba** 'smoke', which is spelled as *toombaba* by Mitchell in the 'Barwidgee vocabulary' (Mathew 1899: 214).

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