



# The Native Tribes of South-East Australia

*Alfred William Howitt*

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## **The Native Tribes of South-East Australia** Alfred William Howitt

This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can usually download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1904 edition. Excerpt: ..."incantations "--words of power, chanted in the belief that supernatural influence is, not asked, but compelled, by them, an influence for evil, or for warding off evil. There are also songs which are only heard at the initiation ceremonies, and which are therefore not known to the uninitiated, or to women. To English ears, unaccustomed to the simple and somewhat monotonous airs to which the words are set, there seems but little melody in the chants. But with custom they grow upon one, until at length one feels in some measure the effect which they produce upon an aboriginal audience in so powerful a manner. There is a wild and pathetic music in some of the songs which I have heard chanted by a number of voices together. Such was the song of Ngalalbal, as I heard it at the Murring Kuringal, and the song of the bat, in which at early dawn the whole of the men joined one by one in chorus, the words describing the bats " flitting about in the dim light which shows between the upper boughs of the trees." The makers of Australian songs, or of the combined songs and dances, are the poets, or bards, of the tribe, and are held in great esteem. Their names are known in the neighbouring tribes, and their songs are carried from tribe to tribe, until the very meaning of the words is lost, as well as the original source of the song. It is hard to say how far and how long such a song may travel in the course of time over the Australian continent. A good example of such far-travelled songs is the following, of which I have heard two versions. One runs as follows:--Malla-malle taria-rara uananga Ngumberanga ye-yandaba I heard it first sung by one of the Narrinyeri in 1861, and afterwards Mr. G. W. Rusden sang it for me from memory,...

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