

## Social Divisions of the Birripai

(By W. J. ENRIGHT.)

IN July this year I visited Wauchope, New South Wales, and discovered that there were still four Aborigines living who spoke Birripai.<sup>1</sup> That language was, I learnt, spoken from Rolland's Plains and possibly the Macleay River to the Manning River. Previously I had held the opinion that Kattang was the language of the Aborigines as far north as Kempsey. Professor Radcliffe-Browne, however, stated that Birripai was spoken on the Hastings. Following on his assertion, I made further enquiries, which proved the correctness of his statement. Birripai differs but little from Kattang, but the former I find was spoken by people who had class divisions for marriage purposes, but the Kattang speaking people had no such divisions.

Amongst the Birripai the classes for the males were Wombo, Kurraboo, Wirraw and Murroong; for females the classes were Gooran, Karragan, Wangan and Wirragan. A Wombo could marry a Gooran and the female children would belong to the Karragan

class, but the male children to the Murroong class. If the mother died, the children would belong to the father's class.

A Kurraboo would marry a Wirragan and the female children would belong to the Gooran class, but the male children to the Kurraboo class.

On the north the tauri of the Birripai joined that of the Kumbangerai, whose sociology has been previously described by the late R. H. Mathews.<sup>2</sup> There is a very striking similarity between the names of these classes with the two tribes.

Investigations made last month showed that a stream of culture was moving down our eastern coast, but the group marriage system had not passed beyond the Manning River.

Birripai is the name given to the language by the speakers thereof, and I have retained that name instead of that of the tribe, just as I have given the Warrimee the name of their language, "Kattang."

<sup>1</sup> E. M. Carr, on the Australian Race, Vol. 3, page 238, calls it "Bripi."

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings Aust. Science Congress, Vol. 11, page 488.

## The Meaning of Tirrikiba

IN response to an inquiry by our Treasurer, the following information is supplied by Dr. John MacPherson:

"I am very glad to be able to supply the information required. I have found it in Threlkeld's 'Language of the Aborigines of the Lower Hunter and Lake Macquarie' (1834). Ti-ri-ki signifies 'the flame of fire,' also the

colour red. It is also a verb, signifying 'to be red hot.' The termination *ba* is the genitive of the noun, meaning 'of' or 'belonging to' or, in topography, 'the place of.' Therefore, the term tirrikiba would mean 'the place of the fire' (or something red). Your word only differs in having an 'e' instead of an 'i.' In the same area is Tul-ki-ri-ba—a 'place of brambles' (tul-ki-ni)."