

Grand Central Coffee Palace,
Wellington Street,
A.J.Ellis, Manager

April 25/05

Myself and P.C.Manning & C.McCarty left Nullagine this afternoon to visit a natives camp in search of weapons. When we arrived at the camp we saw all the natives in warpaint & one of the tribe who could speak English came forward and told us they were about to circumcise a boy. So P.C.Manning insisted on us seeing the ceremony. After a long consultation they decided we could see it.

All the men left the camp and took the boy to a piece of ground that had been prepared for the purpose about a mile away from the main camp. None of the women were allowed to come near them or any of the lads only the men who had already been through the rite.

When we got to the place we found a piece of ground cleared about 15 feet long and 3 feet wide with little heaps of sand piled up about 2 feet apart. The lad who was to be operated on was placed at the top of the cleared space with a man on each side of him who kept singing and beating time with a couple of boomerangs.

Then one of the tribe appeared to appoint himself director of ceremonies and he picked out 5 others to assist him. The old men then held a conference and picked out one of the number to operate on the boy who by his appearance was about 17 years of age. All being in readiness the members of the lads tribe were all placed behind him partly lying down with their heads resting on their left hand and a bunch of leaves held over their face. The visitors were all placed in front. Then the MC started to dance on the cleared space getting nearer to the boy with each step and as he passed the small heaps of sand picking up a little and throwing it over the boy, each of his assistants going through the same performance which was repeated 4 times and as each one got near the boy he pulled aside the piece of rag which covered his penis and exposed it to the boy at the same time telling him that was how he would be when they were finished with him.

That part being finished the MC ran out to the visiting blacks and bringing one of their number on to the cleared space threw him down on his back and pretended to be having sexual intercourse with him at the same time

explaining to the boy that he could do that to the girls when they made a man of him. Each of his assistants went through the same performance.

That being finished the boy was taken a few yards and then a human operating table was formed, two throwing sticks being stuck in the ground and two men getting down with one hand grasping the stick and the other resting on the ground; they were shoulder to shoulder. Then two more got under them on their hands and knees, thus acting as a support for the first two. The lad was then brought back and laid on the backs of the two, another man jumping across his chest with his back turned to his face so that he could not see who was performing the operation. Then two more came up and placed a throwing stick in the boy's mouth holding each end. Then the old man got between his legs and commenced the operation, first cutting a line round the penis with a piece of stone near the testicles. He then commenced to skin the penis down to the head, he then made another circle round and pulled the pieces of skin off. The operation lasted about 3 minutes during that time the lad never uttered a cry or could I see any movements of the hands or feet which were left free. He was then taken away by a couple of men and I was told by the other natives he would not be allowed to see a woman for three weeks, after that he would be considered a man and fit to get married.

The other natives also told me that the one who performs the ceremony is responsible for the boy's life. If he dies the old man is also killed by a member of the tribe.