

Aborigines & Fisheries Dept

27th June,

1.

The Chief Protector of Aborigines,

P E R T H.

Sir,

Enclosed I hand you in duplicate a few particulars concerning the vegetable product sent down from North Kimberley by Father Nicholas.

You will notice that "Pituri" is prepared in several ways and used for various purposes.

I shall be very interested to see the report of the Government Analyst, of which I trust you will send me a copy as soon as it is available.

At foot I give you titles of the two volumes referred to in our conversation of the 21st inst.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

for DIRECTOR.
Lb

"Natives of Australia" H.W.Thomas, F.A.

"The Native Tribes of South East Australia". A.W.Howitt, D.Sc.

The above two works are offered at 3/- and 8/- respectively by Francis Edwards, Bookseller, 75, High Street, Marylebone, London.

Pituric or Pitcheri is prepared from the leaves and twigs of *Duboisia hopwoodii* (F.v.M.) a Queensland^(?) plant ~~(?)~~ extremely patchy in distribution.

The leaves and twigs are gathered at certain times of the year and treated in different ways. The simplest is to hang them up to dry and then crush them to a powder. Another method, somewhat more complicated is to dig small holes, about 2 feet deep in the sand and fill them with live coals. When the holes are sufficiently heated the embers are removed and the leaves and twigs placed in them, covered up with hot sand and thus thoroughly dried, they are then taken out and disintegrated.

A third treatment is described in Thomas' "Natives of Australia". After roasting on the ashes of a fire the chips become pliable and are wetted, teased up with the fingers and the larger fragments removed. Leaves of the *Wirra* (*Acacia salicina*) are heated over the fire and then burnt, these ashes are mixed with pituri and the whole worked up into quids about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in diameter. These are chewed.

It is also smoked; for this purpose the leaves are damped, mixed with potash from the ashes of suitable plants and rolled up in the shape of a cigar. This too is often chewed and the saliva swallowed.

Sometimes pituri is taken before fighting to produce excitement, if taken in small quantities it has a powerful stimulating effect, enabling long journeys to be made with^{-out} fatigue and with but little food.

According to Thomas it is also used by both sexes as a narcotic, it seems to produce a voluptuous dreamy sensation.

It is also utilised in the capture of emus, a small quantity being placed in the waterholes which the birds are known to visit.

After drinking they are stupified, and thus become an easy prey to the hunter, hidden in the vicinity.

The aborigines value this product very highly, they will travel hundreds of miles to procure it and have been known to offer all kinds of weapons as presents for a small quantity.