SAMFORD ABORIGINAL BORA RING.

Movement For Its Preservation

Efforts are being made by interested public organisations, including the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, to ensure the permanent preservation for posterity of the large aboriginal Bora ring at Samford, 16 miles from Brisbane.

Comparatively few Bora rings are known in Queensland. In recent years some of these have been destroyed or effaced, notably the large bora rings on private property at Keperra and at Kipperring, Redcliffe.

The Samford ring, which is connected with a smaller ring, is considered to be the most complete and best preserved Bora ground in the neighbourhood of Brisbane and most probably in Queensland also.

These Bora grounds were sacred meeting places for the tribes. Here took place the manhood (Kippa) initiation ceremonies, at which the presence of women was forbidden on pain of death.

In the history and folk lore of the primitive original inhabitants of this land they can be compared with Stonehenge in the Druidical ceremonies of the ancient Britons and the unhewn monolithic stone altars (dolmens and menhirs) in Brittany, Guernsey, and parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, some of which are believed to date back to Neolithic times.

On the authority of Tom Petrie there were Bora grounds for the Kippa ceremonies at Samford, for the Ipswich, Mount Cressbrook, and Mount Brisbane tribes; at North Pine, for the Logan, Amity Point, Pine, Moreton, and Bribie tribes; and near Redcliffe, for the Maroochy, Noosa, Kilcoy, Durundur, and Barambah tribes. (Editor’s Note: Another bora ring has since been located in the Beerwah Forestry area.)

CULT OF THE SKY HERO

The aboriginal religion was expressed in a number of cults. The Australian Encyclopaedia says that Eastern Australia, at least south of Cape York Peninsula, was the region of the sky-hero cult. Bora grounds were associated with this cult. This sky-hero was variously known as Goin and Biral in Queensland, Gulambra, on the north coast of New South Wales, Baiame, often with a son, Daramulun, in central New South Wales, Bunjil in Victoria, and Murundere on the lower Murray.
The sky-hero was the Creator of all things; he introduced laws, totemic and other forms of organisation, customs and rites. He was the supreme and irrefutable authority for social and ritual behaviour.

After ending his life on earth, Baiame (or Goin or BiraL) ascended to the sky. The Bora ring represented his sky world, and the bull roarer was the voice and symbol of himself or of Daramulun. Burial ritual ensured the progress of the soul to the sky world "on top." Trees bearing engraved patterns, surrounding or near burial and initiation grounds, symbolised the path to the sky. Baiame was definitely regarded by the eastern aborigines as the lawgiver and judge of the dead. In addition, though he lived in the sky he could be communed with. "Civilised aborigines assert that they knew of God before the white men arrived: he was Baiame."

The Samford Bora or Kippa ring is on private land, but the owner has preserved it from destruction or effacement. However, he is considering selling the property, and for this reason the Samford Bora Grounds Preservation Committee was formed on 9 July. Members of the Committee comprise representatives of the Royal Society of Queensland, the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, the Queensland Women's Historical Association, the Anthropological Society of Queensland, the National Parks Association of Queensland, the Brisbane Bushwalkers, and the University of Queensland Bushwalking Club.

The object of the Committee is to raise approximately £300 to cover survey fees and other expenses and compensate the owner for removal from his paddock of the required area, about seven acres, in consideration of which he will surrender the freehold to the Crown, which it is proposed will then gazette it as a Reserve.

The University of Queensland has been asked to accept nomination as Trustee as it is an incorporated body and because its Anthropology Section will have an active continuing interest in the site. As the National Trust is not yet incorporated it is not eligible. Members of the several Societies and other interested persons have been asked to contribute towards the project and so enable the needed sum to be raised quickly and without the need for a public appeal.

Sir Raphael Cilento (President of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland) is Chairman of the Committee; Dr. D. F. Tugby is Vice-Chairman, and Dr. E. N. Marks is Secretary-Treasurer. Contributions can be sent to Dr. Marks, c/- Department of Entomology, University of Queensland.—

C.L.