

# CARVED TREES

Aboriginal cultures  
of western NSW



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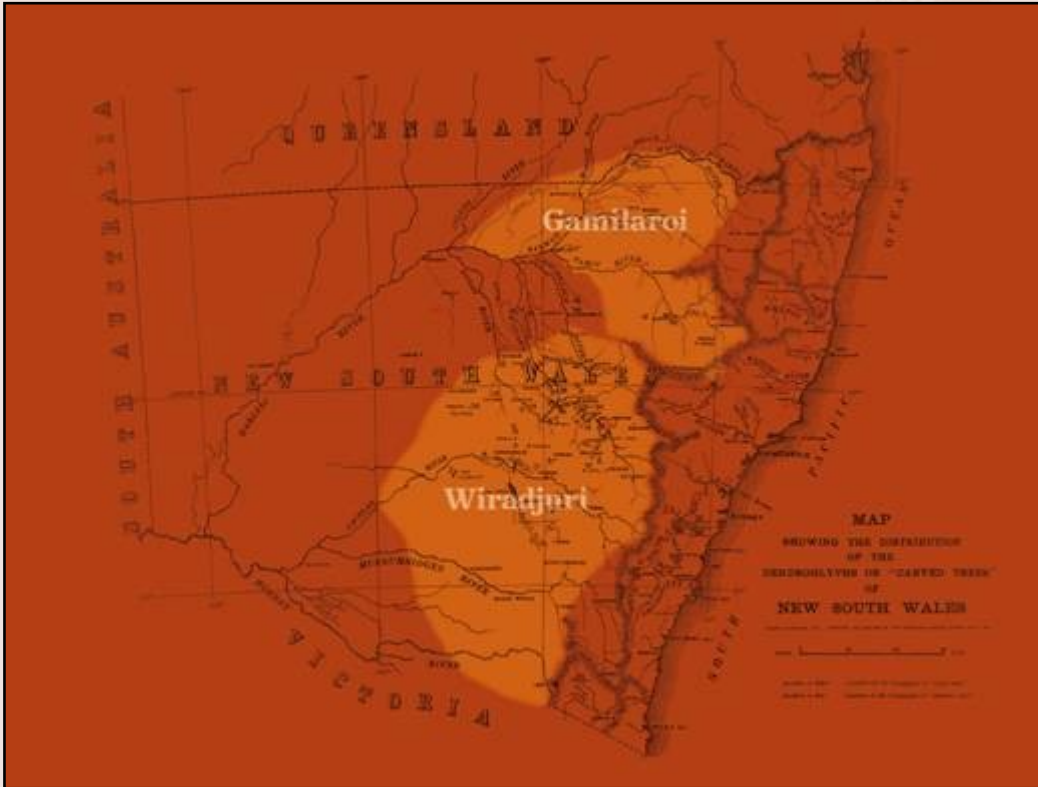
# The Exhibition



Wiradjuri country PXE 1018/Vol11\_2a Towle collection

- rare surviving photographs of traditional Aboriginal carved trees
- the carving of trees is almost a lost tradition
- carved trees are heritage listed
- created by the Wiradjuri and Gamilaroi nations

# Wiradjuri and Gamilaroi



- the Wiradjuri are the largest Aboriginal group in NSW
- Wiradjuri carved trees were primarily for burial markers
- Gamilaroi carved trees were primarily for ceremonial initiation 'bora' ground markers

Graphic created by Simon Leong for the State Library of NSW.



# Carved Tree Designs



Wiradjuri country. Taphoglyph near Dubbo. Henry King a3533002



Gamilaroi country snake design pxe1018vol5\_5a

- those beside graves marking a notable member of a tribe often feature geometric patterns
- these designs represent ritual and kinship affiliations of the deceased
- those found on initiation or 'bora' grounds often had animal totems such as goannas and snakes

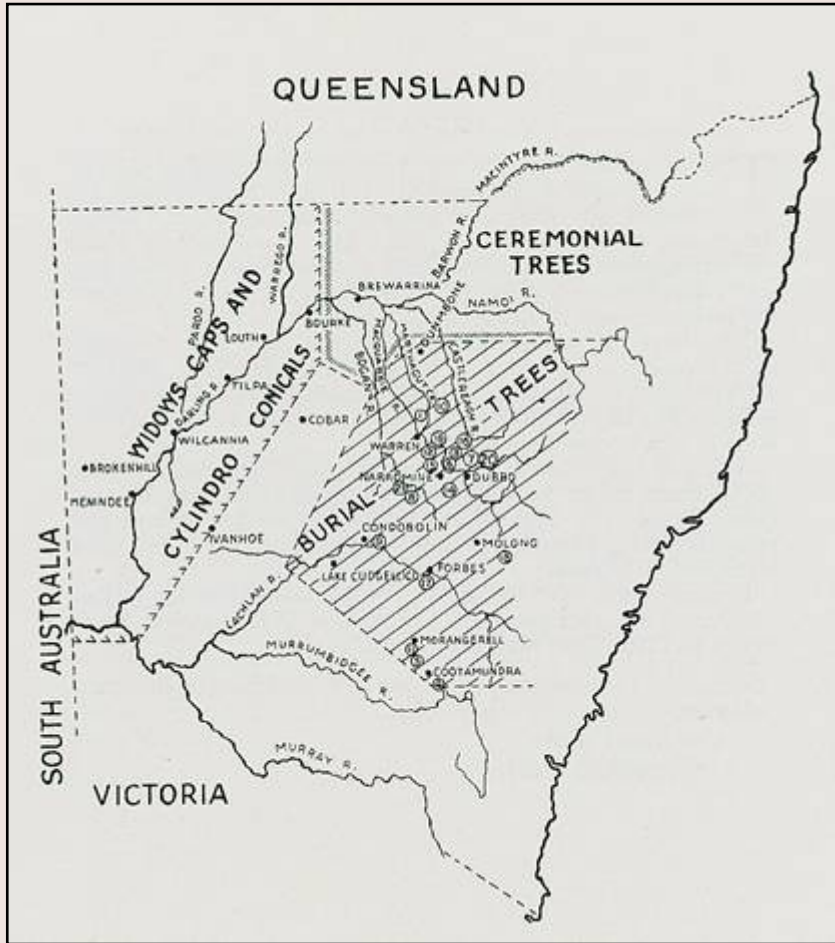
# European Discovery



Aboriginal Arboglyph, one of four trees carved by the Boree tribe on the death of Yaranigh 1847 a3525001

- the first European account was given by the explorer John Oxley in 1817
- during the early 1900s, many Europeans documented and collected carved trees
- Europeans also removed trees to destroy evidence of Aboriginal occupation

# Location

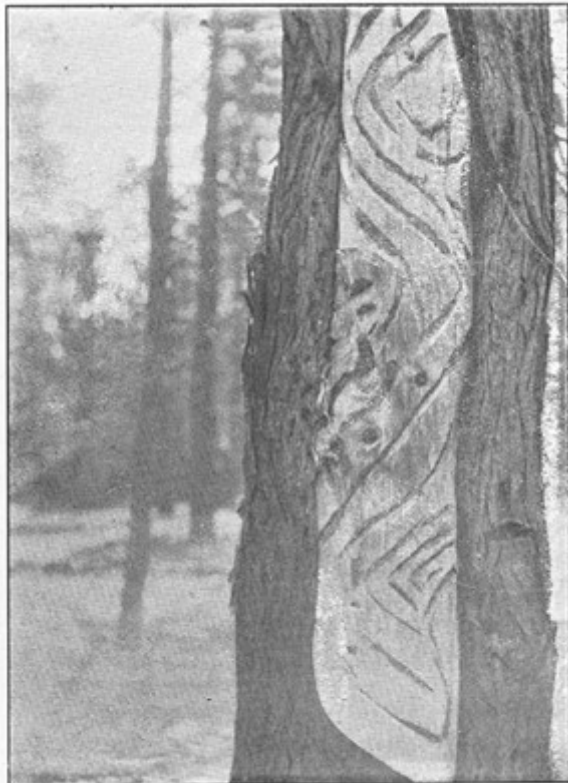


Map of NSW Reproduction Lindsay Black BurialTrees002

- predominantly in Western NSW
- there are around 60 original trees still standing
- the largest site of surviving trees is at Collymongle station



# Return of the Trees



*G. Burrow, photo.*

ABORIGINAL TREE CARVINGS, NEAR BARADINE, N.S.W.

Sacred tree from the bora 'initiation' ground from Barradine. Photo courtesy of Barradine Local Aboriginal Land Council.



Sacred Tree from Barradine on display at the Barradine Local Aboriginal Land Council. Photo courtesy of Barradine Local Aboriginal Land Council.

- this tree from Baradine was carved in 1876
- it was removed by Europeans in 1918
- it was returned to the Barradine community 92 years later
- it is now on display at the Barradine Local Aboriginal Land Council

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## Bibliography

### Images (in order of slideshow)

Unless stated, all photographic images from the Clifton Cappie Towle Collection

Wiradjuri country  
PXE 1018/Vol11\_2a

Graphic created by Simon Leong for the State Library of NSW.

Aboriginal Arboglyph  
One of four trees carved by the Boree tribe on the death of Yaranigh, 1847  
a3525001

Wiradjuri country. Taphoglyph near Dubbo.  
Henry King  
a3533002

Gamilaroi country snake design  
pxe1018vol5\_5a

Map of NSW Reproduction  
Lindsay Black  
BurialTrees002

Aboriginal Tree carving near Barradine NSW

Tree on display at the Barradine Local Aboriginal Land Council

### Digital Sources

[www.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)

### Books

Black, Lindsay. 1941. *Burial Trees – being the first of a series on the Aboriginal customs Of the Darling Valley and central New South Wales*, Robertson & Mullens, Melbourne.

Etheridge, R. 1918. *The Dendroglyphs or 'Carved Trees' of New South Wales*, Department of Mines, Sydney

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