



Melbourne  
11 June 1897

My dear Spencer

I found the memorandum about  
 what you are my wife and now  
 translate for your consideration - I am  
 writing to the Ministry at  
 Melbourne as "how" will not be  
 my best.

(A) when a woman is allotted to a man  
 under the law assignment she becomes  
 his individual wife - always excepting the  
 - sub-assignment of marital rights of the  
 husband's brothers. Does this nominal

right of the other now + the *subura* exercise  
 from to a time when are the "burthen"  
 had their lives in common?

In such tribes as the *Bumai* the  
 position of individual wife is established  
 but the old communalism remains.

(2) When the *Praura* group is together and  
 a child is born in consequence the woman  
 could not tell which of her *Prauras* is the  
 individual father. The "group" was in this  
 case the father. I have heard of such a  
 case among the *Dieri*.

(3) There is much force in your remarks about  
 female descent. We may assume that it goes  
 back at any rate to the formation of the *Mija*  
*litens*. Did it arise then? I am unable to  
 see why it should have arisen then, if the  
 preceding state was one of promiscuity, and it  
 may be borne in mind that there was nothing  
 depending upon this descent in the female line  
 — there nothing to pass of inheritance — as would  
 have been the case if there savage had been  
 in the "agricultural stage". Nothing could pass  
 but the *Wai* name. Can we assume that  
*Wai* names could help the "segregation"?

If this suggestion be near the truth there may it not be that country  
descent through the mother is a survival which has persisted under  
changed conditions, much as the relationship terms, which apply to the  
Triawun group, have been retained in tribes which no longer have that  
— but instead the "individual" form of marriage established, such as the  
Kumai — when I never heard of the exercise of the marital rights by the  
husband either.

Yours faithfully

Alford