

Many
thanks for
your letter of July 15
received here on
Dec. 11.

Bombora

6.

Dec 24:01

My dear Fison,

I cannot remember whether or not I have written to you from this most miserable corner of the globe. Here we are simply stranded waiting for something in the way of a steamer or sailing boat to take us round to Port Darwin and it looks much as if we should have to wait for some time yet.

This letter goes if the mail route be yet open across to Cairnwood in Queensland & so south. Travelling overland just now is out of the question as any day we may have a great flood and if not washed away with all our belongings into the Gulf might be stuck up for goodness knows how long. The

steamer which 4 times a year started
call here it was at the bottom of
the ocean and no one seems to be
in any hurry to replace her.

We have done pretty well all
that we can do in the time spent
a few odd things and indeed it is
rather too hot to work. We vary
between 100 to 109 in the shade every
day and everything is sticky +
muggy and generally uncomfortable.

The slightest exertion makes you
perspire by the quart - even that
of sitting down to think.

However we have got some good
results. amongst these tribes all
of them closely allied + also undoubtedly
not very different from the tribe
whom we met on the way over.
We have looked out their organization
+ totemic system. + many other

things.

Right through from the Arunta in the south
to the Gulf tribe there is the same idea of reincarnation.
In the part of the world each totem originates from one
great animal or ~~animal~~ (or plant) which wanders about the
country leaving spirit children in various spots. When an
individual die he or she finally goes back in spirit form to
this spot and sooner or later undergoes reincarnation. There
is a very pretty + suggestive funeral ceremony in connection
with mourning. The dead person's bones (the flesh is
eaten by relatives previously) are brought into camp where a large
number of natives are assembled. They perform ceremony
relating to the dead man's totem and at the close the bones
are collected and placed in a hollow bough of a tree the
outer surface of which is all covered over with a design in

Aranda
10/2/01

red & white down which belongs to the dead person's
totem. Here instead of "being gathered unto his father"
he is clearly "gathered unto his totem". From the
Arunta northwards there is a gradual transition from the
highly dy-piggedly manner of descent of the totem to the strict
descent in the paternal line. I am inclined to think
that in totemic matter the Kaitch - Umatahera tribe
right in the very centre are the most primitive but this is
merely theory and so had perhaps better be clucked
onboard. We are very anxious to get on to the
Larrakia tribe near Darwin amongst whom there are said to be
no class system nor initiation rites.

Thurs day. The most horrible unnatural kind of Thomas clay. We wish we
could transport ourselves into the bosoms of our families. There is no
mail + we hear the route is cloudy & drought of 70. weather
gone when you will get this. Best wishes for the New Year
Yours very sincerely
W. Aldrich Spencer.