

Brisbane

10

2 April 1902

My dear Speences.

Many thanks for yours
of March 26th, and for the MSS
returned - and with which I
am glad you were pleased.

Re calling upon their namesakes, I will try and get further particulars, and see if I can trace it any further up the coast. I candidly admit now - as I did to you personally on the Changsha - that there are traces of this totemism about, but I can assure you that they are mighty difficult to get hold of. Whether on the other hand, what we do find in North Queensland, is an archaic form (since highly developed and specialised in Central Australia) or ^{only} the last remnants of a complete system once practised all over ~~the~~ the Continent, is a matter I suppose

which cannot be decided upon at present with any degree of certainty. I can assure you however, that I will try and find out all I can.

Re the natives and the white men - is a matter that has also puzzled me. They certainly had the idea with the first advent of the whites. I spent my Easter holidays with the Petries - Mr. Thor. Petrie of North Pine who came out as a boy in 1837 - to gather some information re the old Brisbane aboriginals - of which tribe only two are now known. It was the old gentleman's brother who "discovered" Darranbori (Darrin, the convict) on the Mary River. I think he said, ^{possibly} Mrs. Thor Petrie told me that he often spoke with this Darrin about the blacks he had been living with all those years, the latter ~~and~~ explaining how the blacks had received him as ~~as~~ one of their ~~own~~ warriors returned. The same idea is also prevalent all up the coast and in the peninsula, and it has often occurred to me that the idea

may have originally arisen through pre-historic ^{contact} with the New Guinea and Torres Strait Papuans who are certainly of a much lighter colour than the aboriginals. These Papuans - we have evidence of this - certainly did come a long way down the Queensland coast following reef to reef. By means of the system of intercommunication, it therefore seems to me possible that the blacks were acquainted with a lighter-coloured race - which was confirmed with the advent of the whites. ~~Not to the south~~ ~~may not be exact, I certainly~~ ~~think~~ It is only from the fact of the idea of whites springing up from blacks being so deep-rooted, that ~~some~~ ^{an} explanation ought to be sought: the idea seems too universal, to cast it aside without ^{Suggesting} ~~thinking~~ ^{(think) I think given by} ~~the~~ ^{other} explanation. Of course, you know the other explanation which is also feasible - from what I know in the north regarding the

treatment of the corpse (skinning,
singeing the flesh).

By the by, Tom Petrie told me another
very interesting thing about "Danauboi",
which was to the effect that though
he had been scarred - by similar
means and fashion, ^(pattern) as the natives
amongst whom he lived - none of
his scars were raised. Indeed, I
have never seen yet a European
with a true "Keloid": this seems to
confirm me in my conviction that
there must be something different
(probably physiological) between the
two kinds of skin.

~~By the~~ Again, Tom Petrie tells me
that the old Brisbane blacks used
to explain a h.c. child by reckoning
that the mother must have been
covered by a migger when ^{he was} wearing
a white shirt!

I agree with you about the
ventriloquism business and will omit
it: at the same time I am satisfied
with Kilopi's statement of the affair,
but with you am satisfied that it must
have been done by natives who were more
or less civilised by contact with whites.

The account of ~~my~~ ^{the} origin of man - the making of an artificial anus - was obtained in the neighbourhood of the mouth of the Normandy, - Princess Charlotte Bay (East Coast).

No. I have got nothing in the shape of Daranulum or Baiame. As to Andrew Lang, I was very annoyed to see the way in which he had twisted my "Mulkari" of Boulia into ~~me~~ a sort of Supreme Deity. I was not writing on Early Religion, and only in order to explain the context, described him as ~~the~~ a Supreme supernatural beneficent being etc - or something after that strain - but as you ~~describe~~ say, Lang must needs "read into it much more than was justifiable".

Yes: I was much amused with the Adelaide 3-column

interview. I am only too anxious
to see the whole completed work.

My bulletin on "Gamei" - is now
going through the press. I am
taking up my Superstition MSS.
on my long trip - and will get
it all in order within the next
few months.

By the by the Mines department
are sending up a geologist (and
surveyor combined) with me - and
on the whole we ought to do some
good work. I am very anxious
to see and describe the underground
(hollowed out) dwellings on Alleya
Island (one of the Wellerby group)
in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

With all good wishes, and
trusting to hear from you soon.

Always sincerely yours,
Walter E. Roth