

Cooktown

8<sup>th</sup> October '98.

My dear Spencer.

I have been putting off writing to you week after week, but until now have been almost run off my head and legs with work, getting everything in readiness for the Commissioner whom we are daily expecting - as soon as he comes, I expect we shall be making a trip right through, overland, to Cape York.

Yes - by Jove, I often smile at the way we used to "chiack" Hickson: Poulton, ~~and~~ I could never stand, and I think you shared the same sentiment, towards the gentleman. I am

delighted at Bourne getting  
Oxford - in addition to his  
scientific attainments, he  
was a thorough gentleman.  
No "suob" about him. When  
next you write to G.C.B. please  
remember me very kindly to  
him, and tell him that his  
old pupil has not done so  
badly after all!

Like yourself, Australian life  
has a great charm for me -  
I love the freedom of existence,  
the hospitality of the people  
in general, the climate, and  
I am extremely fond of my  
work. Of course this year,  
in my position as Protector,  
most of my time has been oc-  
cupied in office and clerical  
work, drawing up regulations,



(So far as Australia was concerned)  
aback in my life, & though I  
tried them in every way, they  
could not get beyond the  
score - both hands & both feet.  
But as I go along, I find  
nothing but surprises everywhere:  
- I guess you have found the  
same.

I heartily congratulate you  
upon McMillans accepting your  
work, and I appreciate  
very much your kindness  
in asking them to send me  
a copy when published: I  
need hardly assure you that  
it will be highly valued by  
me.

Certainly in the N.W. Central,  
and in the Cook (N.E. Coast)  
District, I know of no natives  
calling themselves Kangaroos

enquiring into existing abuses,  
assisting in popularising and  
introducing the new Act generally,  
and consulting with the different  
Police Officials, who will in the  
future look after its proper Execution.

Next year, on the other hand,  
I shall be travelling about  
for the most part of the time,  
and camping out with the  
Blacks, when I hope to have  
even better opportunities than  
at present for carrying on  
my scientific duties. Even  
this year however has shewn  
comparatively good results: for  
instance, during my last visit  
among the Cairns District  
Aboriginals I found the natives  
counting up to 20, in multiples  
of fives; I never was so taken



21  
Kokoyimidir speaking natives  
(but more inland) are the  
"Koko-yellauji" which in their  
language also means ~~Kok~~ "speak  
- thus (like this)". Another  
neighbouring tribe speaks  
"Koko-warra" which in the  
Cooktown dialect means "speak-  
foreign (ie. wild)".

In the Kokoyimidir speaking  
tribe we have two exogamous  
divisions only, while in the  
neighbouring Koko-yellauji  
we find the (good old) four  
groups of Wongko, Bumburi,  
Koorulla, Koorporoo. Only  
in certain of the dances at  
the initiation stage in this  
District is there some (what  
perhaps you would regard  
totemic) allusion to animals,

emu etc men: in the former locality I could obtain no meanings of the names they called themselves collectively.

Up here in the Cook district, the natives call themselves after the places where they are born e.g. Mount Cook = Ki-âr, and any one born in that camp is Ki-âr - ä-rä, the suffix being sometimes pronounced - wä-rä.

Now the Mount Cook boys are friendly, <sup>speaks the same language,</sup> intermarry etc with all the coastal blacks (named on similar lines) from the Auman River to (close up to) Cape Flattery. The term "Koko-yimidar" comprises all these blacks collectively, this term literally signifying "speak - thus (similar, the same)" In close proximity to these



terms you propose adopting in the future re Social Relationships e.g. Clan, Sub-Clan, Status term, Relationship term, Totem name, Term of Address etc. They are simple, definitive, and do not arrogate too much. Even these however will hardly comprise, or define (except perhaps under Status term?) what I find in this Cook District -

e.g. among the males -

- A. name at puberty (early)
- B. name at puberty (late) when he undergoes initiation (of which there is but one ceremony only)
- C. name, when his children begin to toddle, and walk about.
- d. name, when his children are adults and getting on in life.
- e. name (the last of all) when

in that we find a wild cat,  
 Kangaroo, etc dance. On the  
 other hand you must remember  
 that for many generations  
 past there must have been  
 Malay and Papuan influences  
 at work, these foreigners working  
 their way down Cape York,  
 the Gulf etc and so destroying  
 any totemic systems that may  
 have been present among  
 those <sup>Australian</sup> aboriginals whom they  
 conquered and dispersed.

Personally I am finding more  
 and more of this foreign element  
 among these northern aboriginals  
 - e.g. the outrigger canoes, the  
 bark blankets, the taboo, the  
 high development of "cat's cradle"  
 etc.

I am very pleased with the



his flash-scars begin to disappear.

Here is a nice complication!

Of course re all my scientific reports to the Governments, I take a press copy of everything, including photos and drawings. I hope thus to have a lot of MSS etc to shew you when I come down to the 1900 meeting in Melbourne. Of course before that time comes, I shall get you privately ~~the~~ (through your Committee) to ask the Queensland Government to let me represent them officially - I could then be certain of being able to put in an appearance down

down south. I think you  
will be pleased ~~that~~ with  
all the MSS I shall then  
be able to shew you.

Now that the proper season  
is on, I am working hard  
at all the local economic  
plants - not only those used  
for food (and how prepared etc),  
but those used for fibre, for  
poisoning water, for different  
implements, for gum-cements  
etc. The Government Botanist  
is doing the thankless task  
of identification.

Well good bye old chaps  
and with best remembrance,

Always sincerely yours  
Walter E. Roth