

FRAZER

Borotoka.

(43)

Nov 12. 01

My dear Frazer,

At length we have finished our travels by land across this most miserable part of the world. We are now within a few miles of the Gulf settled down in a remote township containing 3 corrugated iron buildings - a public house, a store + a police station - and 3 white men - one in each.

On the way across from the centre we came across two (iron) tubes and got a fair amount out of them and here we have three other tubes. Right through the whole continent - that is from the Arunta in the south to these people in the north - the organization + customs are fundamentally

similar to one another. In every

one of them there is the idea of
reincarnation & of the origin of the
individual originally either according
to the Animate plant or, as in the
Wanamunga & every tribe through
to this place, as the direct offspring
of one great originator of the Totem
who left the spirit evidence at
various spots as he travelled along.

In these tribes & here the
association with the Totem is very
close. When a man dies
(if he be young and has a good
deal of flesh on his bones) he
is eaten - I wish I could say by
his Totemic brethren but such is
not the case by members of the
tribe belonging to the vicinity to
which he dies and then
however his bones are carefully

collected and are finally
buried in a hollow log which
is decorated with the design
of his Totem. That he is eaten
by the "other side" of the tribe is
apparently an allusion to the
Wanamunga idea that the one side
of the tribe is responsible for feeding
the other or rather for performing
the ceremony to insure the increase of
the animal & plant on which
the society feeds. No one
has ever eaten his Totem. North of
the Wanamunga or Coast right
group of Intichiuma ceremonies: the
tribe is supposed to look after its continuance
in food, we have gradually got into
a complete descent in the paternal
line. In one tribe there were
several families of examples of a

a son not being of the same totem
as his father: in the next the
son was with very rare exceptions
of the same totem as his father & always
of a totem belonging to his father's
tribe and here we have strict
paternal descent because the
spirit child knows so they say
what mother to go into & will not
go into a wrong one. If the
child be conceived in a wrong
locality then the spirit has simply
followed up the father from his own
locality.

We cannot find a trace of any
belief right through these central tribes
from Port Augusta in the south to the
Gulf in the north of any belief in
a being who could be called a
deity. There is no mention
made during the initiation ceremonies

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Bombora

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of any such being and the spirit
whose voice is heard when the
lull water sounds is generally only
a 'bogey' to frighten the women. The
nearest approach to anything of the
kind is a creature called Atna-tu
amongst, I think, the Kaitish but
he is not a deity such as
Ba'ame or Davamulua has been
described. I wish we could
really get at the bottom of the
belief in the latter two: unless
the Eastern tribes differ very much
from them a great deal has been
'read into' the native belief in
 regard to them.

I rather expected amongst these
tribes to find marked differences
as compared with those of the centre
but everything is a difference in degree +

10-51
15-01
Keweenaw
out in kind and all beliefs &

custom shade off into one another
at night through.

However we have got together
a good deal of really interesting
material and now have a very
fair idea of the series of timber
running right through the center of
the Continent from Spencer July
up to Carpentaria.

At the present time we are
rather staided in the outlandish
place as the Steamer which calls
here 4 times a year has gone to
the bottom and they do not seem
to be at all in a hurry to get
a new one. This is most
deadly & dull & uninteresting
spot. It is pretty but
scattered from trees and dry yellow
sandstone with just a belt of

fair timber bordering the river.
We have not steaming tropical
weather without a trace of any
tropical beauty & after this long
tramp across the continent
without a sight of anything but
interminable scrub I am quite
longing to see something pretty.

However the natives do not
leave us much time to lament
the lack of scenery and now I
am contemplating how to write
up all our work and at the
same time manage to get through
a year's hard grind of lectures
& laboratory work. It will have
to be done somehow but the prospect
is not altogether pleasant: however
when we are out of this stony weather
& general discomfort we shall
probably feel more energetic: as it is

one gets up in the morning after
a restless night feeling much like
a jelly fish shrouded on a damp
beach.

Kind regards to Mr. Prager. I
trust you are both in the best of
health.

Yours sincerely
Walden Spencer.