

FRAZER
Melbourne (50)
June 7.03

My dear Frazer,

I was delighted to get your letter today and to find that you were in such vigorous form. I have been wondering what you have thought of Lang & Haddon & others. Of the former's very recent writings I have seen but little and cannot help thinking that he is riding his theories to death.

He seems to me only to take hold of a certain number of facts in each case which seem as if they might support his theory to the entire neglect of every other fact which does not do this. However I fancy that his writings - at least his recent ones - are of a most ephemeral nature and that we need not take him as seriously as he does himself.

Haddon's address I read when it came out and wrote him a criticism

of the same at some length which for some reason I did not send and only took up a few days ago. I wish it amongst some forgotten papers.

The theory of the origin of Hominism or rather of the name of Hominic fossils seemed to me most crude & devoid of any foundation. It all depended

upon the assumption that certain articles of food grow in certain places practically to the exclusion of others and that then they found the one or only or at least the chief food of the people inhabiting those areas respectively. This theory could only hold true if we could show that lions or at some time past

Kangaroo grew in one area, antelope in another, black snakes in another & so on but if they are here not a shadow of evidence. Of course we do not get any crocodiles in Central Australia and therefore we do not get a crocodile from fossils there but

at the same time when crocodiles do grow there we get apparently always and plenty of the articles of food which also grow there namely the Hominic fossils.

So take another example in some of the Central parts 'yamus' from the chief vegetable food of the natives & probably have done so from time immemorial & yet at Senkants Creek amongst the Warramunga tribe where they rely to a large extent upon yam as vegetable food the yam is a most insignificant one.

All of this kind of reasoning is expatiating to anyone who knows the natives at first hand.

I am very much interested in your remarks with regard to people at home looking upon the Arunta etc. with their social & ritual systems & custom as peculiar and in the nature of a 'spot'. If it be a 'spot' it is one which occupies a big area extending from Lake Eyre in the south to the northern coast of the

continent to our own personal
knowledge & I have not a shadow
of a doubt but that if we could
get into the interior of N.S.W.,
Queensland & right through West
Australia we should find much
the same thing. Surely the 'Amerinds'
with their most elaborate Shamanistic
rituals - far more elaborate than those
of our Australoids - cannot be regarded
as more 'primitive' than the latter.

In the ms. sent home I have
scarcely described our work without
any remarks upon this subject save
such as you will see in the introductory
chapter in which I refer to the fact
that the truly central tribes are evidently
more primitive than the northern ones
with their gradually increasing development
of 'father-right' & decrease of such
ceremonies as those of initiation. Also
I have pointed out that it is easy to
derive the Warramya & northern customs
& beliefs from those of the Arruuta but
not vice versa. After reading your

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Mullumbidgee.

June 7. 03

Letter I think that it might be
advisable to say something more about
them perhaps in the preface & also to
draw attention to the fact that the
points where in our tribes differ
apparently somewhat from others
described in Australia by other
writers are not really points of
difference but are simply due to
the fact that we have been able to
study matters more deeply than other
workers.

Roth is beginning to
find out the same class of things
amongst the Queensland natives &
has now got clear evidence of the
belief in children not being the result
of sexual intercourse but due to the
fact that spirits enter women. He
told me that he had some evidence
of this before we published but did
not like to publish it - was afraid
to.

He has also given up his
old ideas as to the non-existence of
Polemism amongst his people. Most
of the natives he is amongst or has been

So far are semi-for some) civilized
but I fancy he is getting on to better
work but same - Langmore seems to
have a great charm for him.

Of course we cannot expect to find
such strong development of customs
like those of Antichina amongst
the coastal tribes and unfortunately
Smith's own experience has made
amongst the most modified tribes -
those of the S.E. corner of the
continent.

He practically knows
but little of the interior tribes at
point hand and never had the
chance while he was journeying through
the country of studying their inner
customs & beliefs - in fact in those days
with no such work as yours & Lyell's
to guide him there was little to show
him what to look for in their line
& therefore there will be little reference
in his book to custom associated with

to him other than in regard to
its utilization in marriage.

I hope he will not use the

form of terms & individual

terms. They are entirely

different matter from those in

proper. The only thing I do

not feel quite happy about in his

work is the way in which he is

obliged to rely upon correspondents

for information. In matters such

as class divisions which can be

checked this does not signify

much but when it is a question of

beliefs then I much mistrust

ordinary peoples' evidence. He has

in some remarks of Jason on the

question of Sabon & the way in

which only a few men were submitted

in the Uraboma tribe that these

men were looked up to & held in

respect by the other men which is

sheer nonsense & yet sound quite

right. Jason was by no means

the highly intelligent man whom
Lang tries to make out - he was an
uneducated & quite scientifically
untrained man and though he
was very friendly with the natives
I do not believe him to have been
capable of putting himself in the
native position & of leaving on one
side the prejudices of a white man.

When one has been told the
many extraordinary things which
I have, and all in good faith
by intelligent men, concerning the
natives you begin to trust no one
unless he has made a special study
of the subject & was ^{also} capable of doing
them which Jason was not.

I am very sorry to hear that
Taylor is going to take Amerind
Hottentotism as the standard. If this
be done by most workers then it
seems to me that we had better
invent another term for our own
an Australoid term - say 'Kobong'
or the Warramunga - 'Mungai' & call

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me to be a relic of an older form and food should be so abundant
in Uganda that intichiuma ceremonies would be likely either not to exist
at all or only in the form of traces as in the Gulf country where when food is
abundant.

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Melbourn
June 7.03

the system 'Kobongism' or
'Mungaiism':

I have not seen Mr Mejer's
paper on the Seri Indians - in
fact I have been so busy writing
& getting through Museum & University
work that I have done but little
anthropologic reading - have not even
read 'folklore' but will have a glance
through Mejer in a day or two.

I am very dissatisfied with the
ms. sent home to Macmillan so
do not be afraid to criticize
severely. For one thing I have
not sufficiently made clear the
gradual changes in regard to
such matters as intichiuma, beliefs
in ancestors & origin of spirit
individuals from them etc side by
side with fundamental agreement.
However if you can point out how
I can improve it be as severe as ever

you like and if you think any
points in need either of expansion or
of condensing please let me know.

Crawley is evidently on the war
path again & has written some in-
formation on points. His last question
was to ask if I know of any facts
pertaining to previous custom of incest
between father & daughter, or anything to show
strained relations between father & son
due to jealousy about one of the daughters.
No all of which I could only answer
'No'. In reply to some criticism
he says "As to fear of danger from the
first act of sexual intercourse I suppose
it to be but conscience".

Smith ought to have finished the
fridge of a federal capital & was
will now be back at his work. This
federal capital is a farcical thing & I
pudge my day that he spends upon the
work. However he is in first rate
form - looking younger than ever though
he is now well over 70 & a most
marvellous man. He spent an evening

with me not long ago on a flying visit
to Melbourne & we went at it hammer &
tongs.

Never having had any
experience other than a superficial one
with the central tribes & having presumably
only the much modified coastal tribes
we do not at all believe in the
pauziveness of the Arunta. What I
could say must help to do some day
would be to get amongst the Warabana
a central tribe with maternal descent.

I say visits on the Dieri being more
'primitive' than the Arunta (which in
certain respects they are - maternal descent
& visit) and that they do not have the
belief as to Kiri-karnah & witchdooms
existence of the Arunta. It is quite
true that we have no evidence of them
but when I select by an evening to
study them he found the Diera more
ancient who are as clearly as possible
the equivalents (or I believe them to be)
of the aboriginal ancestors of the Arunta
or if I like & I could get a number
amongst them - not at the mission station
where I select it - I it would be a matter
of my great surprise to me if we did
not find witchdooms in full swing.
At present it is impossible to track the

went but I have my eye on a spot
though hurriedly work makes it quite
impossible for me to get away yet a while
& I do not know what our respective
wives would say. Also this outwork-
work means that I cannot possibly get
leave of absence to visit England which
is a serious drawback.

Kindest regards to Mr. Fraser: I hope
that you are both very well - probably
when this reaches Cambridge you will
be away somewhere on the continent. Every
now & again you might have a moment
to pity we poor exiles who are cut off
from all such delights. I like the
sunshine here but it is a wretchedly
monotonous & philistine land.

Yours very sincerely

W. S. Aldrich Spencer.

P.S. Roseoei green loam ceremony reminds me
of one amongst the Wanamunga (who also
perform *utichicuna* proper) in which members
of any totemic group can rub one another
over with stones supposed to represent parts of a
kangaroo with the object of making themselves
able to catch the animal but also the rubbing
& adorning of the ^{same} stones is supposed to
be beneficial in causing young kangaroos
to emanate from them. His ceremony seems to