

FRAZER

Melbourne.

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July 27. 1913.

My dear Frazer,

I have been owing you a letter for a long time but after a years absence it is difficult to get into the groove of University & other work, and on the top of all this, to write up results.

On the whole I did fairly well more especially as it was new ground and I was amongst tribes who knew me not. At first one feels hopelessly lost but thanks to one or two men who knew the natives I got into touch with them. Most unfortunately Departmental work occupied much of my time and an accident due to a spear hitting my right shin bone - a pure accident as I drove the spear in myself - laid

me low for more than two months during the cool season when otherwise I should have been out amongst the natives.

Atwemo on Melville Island & on the Alkijator River I got some very good results - nothing absolutely new but good confirmation & also extension in some ways of previous work.

In 1911 I could find no trace of Intichiuma ceremonies but last year with much more opportunity for study I came across undoubted traces of them - in fact the ceremonies themselves.

In regard to the procreation question I got most interesting evidence - better in some respects than we had before.

In the Kapradu Tube on the Alkijator River the belief is that when a person dies his spirit part goes out & stays with

his bones. They call this spirit

Yalmuru. After a time the Yalmuru divides into two parts itself and an Iwaiya. The latter being the Yalmuru much what a man's shadow is to a man.

When the Yalmuru decides to be born again he & the Iwaiya stand and the latter in the form of a small pig goes into some food - a Yam or a fish for example. The

Yalmuru leads the future father to the food - helps him to catch or find it. The Iwaiya jumps out & is caught by the Yalmuru. At night time the two come to the camp the Iwaiya smells the father & mother - pulls their hair and breast etc. - and then after satisfying itself that the father is the right one to be its mother (to inside her).

Later on the Yalmuru comes up at night and whips in the father's ear saying that the child inside

the mother is so-so mentioning
the actual name of the ancestor
who is being reincarnated & also telling
the father what the child's totem is.

Another very interesting thing in
connection with the Yalmuru is
that when the child is grown up
into a man the Yalmuru comes
some night & tells him that he is the
Yalmuru - is growing old, his eyes are
dim and his bones sore. That he
wants to rest altogether. He then
tells the Iwaiyu, that is the spirit
of the man, that he must look
after the future child and its
totem. As the natives said

Baranga yalmuru wariji ge:
iwaiyu negeiri yalmuru, which means
the old Yalmuru is done for
completely, the Iwaiyu is the
new Yalmuru. As I have said
in the account that I hope to get
out soon - it suggested two things
first a very crude expression of the
idea "the King is dead: long live the
King" and second of a foreshadowing

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of Weismann's theory of the continuity of the germ plasma. There is a constant splitting off of a ^{new} spirit from an old one - one half perishes the other dies but a perfect continuity is preserved.

The Alligator natives have detailed traditions - as also have all the tribes - of how great ancestors wandered over the country leaving numbers of spirit children behind them who have been reincarnated time after time. They know also everyone is a reincarnation of as the names are perpetuated - in fact the Galumuru always tells the father when the child is and warns him that no other name must be given to it.

It takes a long time + most

patient working out to get much
from the natives + I wish I could
have had more opportunity.
However you will be interested in
some of the results.

I can see that in the future
workers who come in contact as most
will do now with more & less
civilized natives will not come across
them belrips because naturally they
are the first to change when a few
help centers have appeared on the scene
but I am sure that ever convinced
that ~~the~~ belrips with regard to
procreation more or less like those
of the Arunta & Kakadu tribe.
were very widely spread - in fact I
in could have had evidence from
the south before the natives were
contaminated in Victoria & New South
Wales & I. Australia I feel sure
we should have come across the
same thing there.

I hope to get through my notes

in a month or two but can only get a very broken
time in which to work at them.

Kindest regards to yourself & Mr. Frazer. There is
just the remotest chance that I may have to make a
Aqua? visit to England or France at the end of this
year but please do not say anything about it as no
one knows out here & it is only a chance.

Yours very sincerely

W. B. Allison Spencer.