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Additional article :  
Origin of Australian Aborigines

## ORIGIN AND LANGUAGE

On account of the divergence of opinion exhibited by the most celebrated authorities as to the origin of the Australian aborigines, the only method of presenting an acceptable statement regarding it is to note briefly the most rational and best known of the views held by men capable of dealing with the subject.

Sir Geo. Grey (continue to "statement (b)").

The fundamental unity of the Australian race is recognised by all writers on the subject. The extensive system of communal marriages prevailing throughout the whole of the Australian tribes furnishes the strongest evidence of this, and though Sir John Forrest mentions many differences existing between the customs and habits of the natives of the interior and those of the coastal districts, this does not prove a dissimilarity of origin, for other writers maintain that the inhabitants of the whole continent form one people governed by the same laws and customs with allowance made only for the difference of localities. The strong similarity observable in their physical characteristics also point towards their common origin, any marked departure from the type being attributable to abundance or scarcity of food.

As to the ethnological division to which the original race belonged, many opinions have been given by more or less competent authorities. The absence of written historical documents is a distinct proof of the extreme antiquity of the Australian race and to attempt to solve this difficult problem, according to the writer, it is necessary to call in the aid of different branches of science, geography, comparative linguistics, zoology, botany and geology. It must be remembered that at one time the mainland of Africa and Asia had a comparatively unbroken continuity south-easterly as far as Australia, Tasmania and New Guinea, and probably further east and south. Ancient Indian tradition ascribes to this vast continent the name of Lemuria, on the supposition that it was there the lemurs had their centre of development. The existence of this continent which now lies under the Indian Ocean, has been proved by hydrographic surveys which indicate by the banks and shoals now under water where this great land was situated. The Lemurian race flourished and ended before the early part of the

Eocene Age, since its race was the third, and it is from this race, according to the Indian tradition, that the flatheaded aborigines of Australia have been derived. The migration or "dispersion" of the Lemurian race occurred many ages back, when Africa was not in existence as a continent, and when the people were "mere hunters" whose weapons were the spear and possibly the boomerang, and owing to the remarkable isolation to which Australia was subjected after the submergence of the mainland, it has preserved more of the customs, linguistic peculiarities and ways of thought of the black races of antiquity than any other people now existing on the globe.

The Rev. John Fraser, LL.D., while not going so far back as the Third Race period, still follows up this theory of the origin of the Australians by assigning Babylonia as their primal home, and bases his kinship of the African and Australian indigine mainly on history. In Babylonia, according to history, mankind first began to congregate in great numbers, and amongst them were the Hamites, the progenitors of the black races. These Hamites were the first to try and break down the love-law of universal brotherhood and equality, the outcome of this being Nimrod's "Tower of Babel" and here Dr. Fraser thinks began the first movement of the black race towards India, and consequently towards Australia. Kushites or Ethiopians spread in Africa and along the Northern shores of the Arabian Sea, anon into Central Africa and into the mountains of Southern India where after a while another impulse sent them towards Australia, the successive steps being: first into the valley of the Ganges where they were the original inhabitants, then into the Dekkan and into further India, then into Ceylon, the Andaman Islands and the Sundu islands and thence into Australia. Fraser holds with other writers that two streams of population came to these shores, through the North and North West: The Kushite stream as before mentioned, and another consisting of the pure Hamites of the Dispersion who occupied the tableland of the Panjab and the Gangetic Plain, but were driven hence through the rupture of the Babylonian State by the Shemitic (Arab) tribes about 1500 B.C. The earlier Hamites being hemmed in by the Kushites could only escape by sea and thus passed from southern

India to these shores, probably from Hindostan or Further India. Ethnologists recognise two pre-Aryan races in India, the earlier, which had not attained to the use of metals and used only polished flint axes and implements of stone, and the later race which possessed no written records, made grave mounds over their dead, were "noseless", "gross feeders on flesh", "raw eaters" without gods, not sacrificing, without rites, etc. All this suits our aborigines: they are noseless, for they have very flat and depressed noses; they have no gods, no rites of worship and no sacrifices. The native boomerang of Australia is used on the Southeast of India Kattywar, Bombay) and can be traced to Egypt, Thebes both of them Hamite regions. The link between Egypt and Australia is, according to Dr. Fraser, the Dravidian races of the Dekkan of India. Some years ago three boomerangs from Kattywar, Bombay, were presented to the Anthropological Society in London and from a tomb in Thebes three instruments were obtained, all of them true flat boomerangs. Thus, according to Fraser, the material civilisation of the world was commenced by the races of Ham, yet the task soon fell from their hands, for morally they were unfit for it. The Hamites have continued to sink in the social scale, have been crushed down by the other races and thus debased, and wherever the sky above or the earth beneath have conspired to render the means of life meagre and precarious, there the process of decay has been very low but still among their institutions there are traces of better things.

The affinity of the Australian and Dravidian or Egyptian boomerang was made the subject of a paper by Col. Lane Fox and an essay by S. Ferguson M.R.T.A.

The shields and spears of these natives are the most ancient and universal defensive armour in the world, they are mentioned in the Bible long before helmets.

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Chas. Darwin, Descent of Man, Vol. I, P. 194

the Australian natives destroy their halfcaste children.

Eyre's Central Australia Vol. II, P. 324 ditto

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Waiby (Gerland) Anthopologie, Vol. VI, P. 749

greeting by rubbing noses ascribed to Australians.

(No. evidence of this custom in any part of W.A x S.A)

Huxley and Fraser coincide in thinking the Australian Race are identical with the ancient inhabitants of the Dekkan owing to their features being similar to those of the Indian blacks, and the two writers also agree as to the distinct resemblance between the Dravidian and Australian Languages. They assert from this that the immediate ancestors of the Australians were the Dravidians of India. These Dravidians are considered by the best authorities as being certainly negroid and in England, Professor Flower from an examination of their cranium, has classed them as kinsmen of the Australians. The Tamil group are known to have class marriage laws similar to those of Australia. The resemblances between the Dravidian and Australian languages proves that the latter are not isolated, but in their essential root words they have a close relation to the languages of the Southern seas and to similar root words into the language of the great peninsula of India. The exigencies of space forbid the citation of examples of comparison between the Australian and Dravidian tongues. These will be found in a future work, but all writers agree as to the complexity of structure of the Australian language, and the precision with which it can be used, and the aborigines having no powers of invention could never have constructed a language computed to consist of about 4000 words, their language must therefore be the remnant of a state more nearly approaching civilisation than is commonly supposed.

One of the most striking proofs of the great antiquity of this race is to be found in the cave drawings or paintings discovered in various parts of the Commonwealth. These productions are usually found in the coastal districts - sufficient examples existing however to show that this rule is not absolute. Thus in 1830 Ensign Dale, who was the first white man to discover native paintings in the Southern parts of W.A. He records the fact in Stirling's Journal (1851) "an image of the sun it being a circular figure about eighteen inches in diameter...close to this representation of the sun were the impression of an arm and several hands,"

## (2) Physical and Mental Characteristics

F.S. Brockman in the report of his exploration of Nor' West Kimberley, states that there seem to be two distinct types of natives in that district, those seen to the South of the 15th parallel being usually tall and light of limb, whereas those of the extreme north were of a shorter and more robust type, with greater shocks of curly or wavy hair. Both types are well-developed, straight of limb and fairly muscular.

Their physical and mental characteristics are shown in their manufacture of belts, headbands, etc.  
 ..... From the fur of the opossum or the human hair, the fashioning of that wonderful weapon the boomerang, or the still more wonderful system of leverage represented in the wommera or throwing stick, and many other implements and utensils for war and domestic purposes.

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 In disposition and character they are as variable as Europeans. They are, according to Grey, as apt and intelligent as any other race of men, subject to the same affections, passions and appetites as other men, their perceptive powers are large, therefore anything requiring perception only is readily mastered. Stokes exemplifies this in his mention of Miago, whose accuracy of observation with regard to the exact direction of a harbour or any point along the coast where the Beagle had touched, he had ample proof. Every place visited during the voyage was remembered by Miago, he seemed to carry the ship's track in his memory with the most careful accuracy and although tested frequently and under varying circumstances, he was invariably right. \*

Stokes also says that although the natives he met with were ignorant and incurious to the last degree, they were generally suspicious rather than treacherous and not insensible to such acts of kindness as they could comprehend. All explorers with the single exception of Giles agree in their testimony as to the simple confidence exhibited by the natives towards them, and a writer in the Perth Gazette, 1833 (P. 114) specially mentions that in not one instance had the aborigines of this state abused the confidence of the white men whom they encountered in the bush. Many instances

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Miago afterwards entered Captain Grey's service and on the arrival of Governor Hutt in Perth the native entered Captain Grey's room and made the following speech in his capacity as imaginary Governor :

Yise naga yongar Perth bak-ad-jee yuado  
Moondee moondee gurrang gurrang boola,  
Mirgana mirgana gurrang gurrang boola  
Yalgonga yalgonga gurrang gurrang boola,  
Yaru bal?

Buckilbury wattup gidgee, yam bal gurrang boola? Bunbury gurrang gurrang boola. Golan biddie gwabba, mammarup wango-ween boola. Golambiddie wilgi nabbow, yago mial, golambidie donga broo mammerup meno been boola, mammerup gurrang ga-duk golambiddie gid-jee, Dule. Waunna Governor Yool, yahi Perth yongar, bakadjee yuado, gwabbalitch. Henceforth this people of Perth must not fight; "Moondee moondee", you are always quarrelling, "Yalgonga Yalgonga" you are always quarrelling, What is the reason of this? "Buckilbury" speared "Wattup", why was he so very angry? "Bunbury", you are very quarrelsome. The young men behave very well, the old men are always wrangling. The young men paint themselves and the women look at them, the young men are not aware of this, but the old men are very jealous, and being in a passion spear the young men, this is very wrong. Now another Governor is come and you people of Perth must fight no more. This is very good.

of their kindness to white men when in their power could be given did space permit. The first white men who came in contact with them speak of their inoffensive and tractable character, rendered placable and well-disposed by kind and consistent treatment.

Sturt makes special mention of the good effects which followed from Eyre's system of uniform kindness towards them, resulting in the fact that Sturt could continue his travels and explorations with the assistance of every tribe met with on the way and that in all his intercourse with them he never once had occasion to raise his arm in hostility against them.

Of their physical characteristics, Stokes says of those he met that they have very quick and deep set eyes, a rapidly retiring forehead, great enlargement of the frontal sinus and the flat nose and thick lip of the savage races, a great disproportion existing between the upper region of the body and the lower extremities;

they have very prominent chests, combined with a great want of muscular development. Development of the chest, arms, etc. in the north and the limbs and legs in the south was the result of climate.

Their average height is less than Englishmen and greater than Frenchmen, but they are less muscular and lighter in build than either.

They are quick of apprehension, shrewd, shew great facility in learning English, are ready, tractable and in the main faithful, and Eyre thinks they are truthful and honest towards each other and to Europeans, and are not more virulent in their passions or more vicious in their propensities than are the larger number of the lower classes in so called civilised communities; they will willingly do anything for a person to whom they are attached and by kindness an influence can be obtained over them amounting almost to authority.

In obtaining their food, the natives exhibit qualities that cannot be surpassed, such as quickness of sight, readiness of hand, caution in arranging plans, judgment in directing them, patience in waiting for the result, endurance in pursuing and strength in holding fast.

Their methods of calculation are however, primitive, such as that by tally sticks or moons in the case of time. In numbers they do not seem to be able to count correctly beyond ~~two~~. In three

some parts of the State it is said that they can count as far as five, the fingers of one hand, but in almost all the written dialects up to date, the word to express a number more than two is either a variation of the word for "many" or a repetition of the word for two as koojarra = two; <sup>koojal (Southern W.A.)</sup> koojarra-koojarra = 4, etc.

The Southern natives counted one, two, three, gēn, koojal, mardain and marra- hand fingers - for five; many = bulla.

### (3) Social Condition and Domestic Habits

This does not seem to need additions. (In Page 203 it is mentioned that B. Smyth says it is doubtful whether the Egyptian weapon had the power of returning, like most of those made by the Australians, the Egyptian being the true hunting weapon, the returning boomerang is not so, it was probably evolved from the true boomerang and natives seem to use it more for amusement than for killing game.) The "return boomerang" is probably truly Australian as the species of wood from which it is made is only found in certain areas. From Geraldton E. N.E. and N. the gooraara (prickly acacia) carried this name with it to its eastern limit. In the Broome and other Northern areas there were several woods, koorilee, jarrongur, etc. The Geraldton term for "comeback" boomerang was walañu. The Broome terms were koorilee lanjee, jarrongur lanjee etc. Inspector Brophy who lived in Carnarvon for some time thinks that the light hair peculiar to many of the natives on the Murchison and Gascoyne will have come to them through the Dutch mutineers landing on the coast and that the light haired natives are descendants of these Dutch mutineers. The broadfaced "Dutch" types of fair, curly haired natives, met with on and beyond the head waters of the Gascoyne and Ashburton Rivers, showed unmistakable Dutch features and build.