

FROM THE ARCHIVES

**GILLEN'S SCIENTIFIC CORRESPONDENCE:
SELECTED LETTERS FROM F. J. GILLEN
TO W. BALDWIN SPENCER**

Edited by
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Introduction

F. J. Gillen was born on 28 October 1855 in South Australia. He received little formal education, becoming a public servant at the age of eleven as a postal messenger in Clare, South Australia. From 1875 to 1899 he worked throughout Central Australia, gaining promotion in the SA Telegraph Department and eventually becoming Station Master at the Alice Springs Overland Telegraph Station.

By that time, he was the most senior and experienced officer on the (Telegraph) Line and virtual administrator of Central Australia as postmaster, telegraph stationmaster, stipendiary magistrate and sub-protector of Aborigines. He championed the cause of Aborigines throughout his life, in 1891 even vainly charging a policeman with murder.

W. Baldwin Spencer was born in Manchester in 1860. He studied at the Owens College before attending the University of Oxford. During his stay in Oxford he heard E. B. Tylor's first series of lectures and helped in the transfer of the original Pitt Rivers collection to the University in 1884. In 1887 he was appointed foundation professor of biology at the University of Melbourne, a post he retained until he retired.

Spencer and Gillen first met in 1894 when the Horn Scientific Expedition, of which Spencer was a member, terminated in Alice Springs. The expedition had been established in order that geological and mineralogical appraisals, and reviews of the flora; fauna and records of the Aboriginal inhabitants could be obtained. After the main expedition had left Alice Springs, Spencer stayed on to make further zoological collections.

The Pitt Rivers Museum Archives holds 185 letters written by Gillen to Spencer between 1894 and 1903, and one reply from Spencer written in 1904; they are a rich testimony to their close collaboration and friendship. They have not previously been published and the three editors have just completed preparation of an annotated edition of the complete series (Morphy, Mulvaney, and Petch in press). Those reproduced here are a small sample of this larger work.

Gillen's correspondence shows how they were both stimulated by their collaboration. They started their partnership while Spencer was editing the anthropological volume of the Horn Scientific Expedition's Report (a volume to which Gillen contributed a separate paper). During the summer of 1896–7 they conducted intensive fieldwork adjacent to the Alice Springs Telegraph Station, attending a series of ceremonies they called the 'Engwura'. This fieldwork represents the longest and most concentrated anthropological field research in nineteenth-century Australia.

A torrent of correspondence and notes from Gillen then followed, culminating in the publication by Macmillan of their classic, *Native Tribes of Central Australia* in 1899. When working in Alice Springs, Gillen always took advantage of his location 'in the field' to check facts, attend ceremonies and interview informants. The correspondence continued after 1899, until it was interrupted by their longest period of fieldwork together during the 1901–2 expedition, which travelled from Oodnadatta in South Australia through to Borroloola on the Gulf of Carpentaria. The fruits of this research were published as *Northern Tribes of Central Australia* in 1904.

The correspondence documents the intellectual process, the outstanding contribution made by Gillen, and the transformation of both into figures of international standing. There is considerable material in the letters which illuminates the ways in which their books were constructed and the independence and understanding shown by Gillen.

Gillen's dedication to ethnography, and the extensive details of aboriginal society with which he supplied Spencer, placed future scholars in his debt, but his work had profoundly negative implications for his family. Gillen had political aspirations (one of his brothers was a successful South Australian politician), but he turned down the only serious approach he ever received to enter politics because of his commitment to anthropology. He also turned down several well-paid jobs in order to have time to complete his research in Alice Springs. When he eventually did transfer south, he was forced to take a job he disliked in a town (Moonta) he hated.

With the publication of *Native Tribes* and *Northern Tribes*, Gillen achieved fame in intellectual circles both inside and outside Australia. Unfortunately, this fame was never matched by formal recognition of his work. He received neither honours nor awards, not even election to a full Fellowship of the Anthropological Institute, an honour given to both Spencer and Edward Stirling, the anthropologist on the Horn Expedition. Although he contributed greatly to the fame which rewarded Spencer with an FRS and a CMG, his work was never recognized by his own government. Tragically he died prematurely from a debilitating neurological disorder, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (a form of motor neurone disease), in 1912. It is to be hoped that the publication of these letters will restore the balance of the perceived relationship between the two men and their work, a balance and equality always recognized by the men themselves.

These letters were all written to a close friend and collaborator and were never intended for publication. Indeed, from what we know of Gillen's modesty and sense of inadequacy as a scholar, he would have been very much inhibited in what he said and may have been unwilling to write them at all if he could have foreseen that they would one day reach a wider audience. The reader of these letters is thus a privileged visitor into a private world, a world which shows the bonds between two anthropologists and the private personality of the writer.

The letters coincide with the period of Spencer and Gillen's main collaborative research and the years during which their first two major works were published. They cast light on their relationship with the Aboriginal people with whom they worked, the degree to which they conformed to the prejudices of their day, and the degree to which their views prefigure a later and more positive attitude. Although such an attitude is demonstrated in the letters, much of the language used by Gillen to refer to Aboriginal people appears completely inappropriate to the reader of today. Objectivity thus requires the suspension of prejudice about prejudice if the letters are to be placed in the context of their times.*

* *Editors' note:*

Readers should note that the publication rights for the five letters reproduced below belong to the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. The editors of *JASO* are grateful to the Museum for permission to publish these letters.

THE LETTERS¹*Letter 26*

This letter was sent after Spencer and Gillen had just finished their first period of intensive fieldwork together, at the Alice Springs Engwura. It shows the deep personal friendship between the two men and the start of the collaborative process that led to the writing of their first book, The Native Tribes of Central Australia.

Alice Springs
9th February 1897

My dear Spencer,

You are at the present moment speeding along between Quorn and Adelaide, and, while you would probably prefer to be returning here, I am envying you the prospect of so soon being in beautiful little Adelaide. Tomorrow you will doubtless start for boom-stricken, microbe-ridden, frowsy old Melbourne, a week later I picture you, after a night with Howitt² and Fison,³ gowned and capped, walking into your lecturing room with far-away gaze and contemplative mood. The students cheer and make sotto voce observations about the Sun Chip on your nose. After bowing your acknowledgements, you announce that the subject of your discourse upon that occasion will be protoplasm. You begin—‘Protoplasm, now what is protoplasm?’ Pause. ‘Protoplasm, ladies and gentlemen, is no longer an imperfectly understood force, his connection with one of the marches of the Achilpa⁴ has been clearly demonstrated on the sacred grounds of the Engwura.’⁵

1. The text of the letters below is as close a rendering of Gillen’s handwriting as possible and practicable. Obvious spelling mistakes and idiosyncrasies of punctuation and capitalization have, however, been rectified—on the grounds that it was felt that for this publication no great purpose would be served by an exact transcription of errors that would interfere with ordinary readability; and a number of paragraph breaks have been added, for the same reason. In silently editing these letters it is a minimalist approach that has been adopted: the intention has been to reproduce as far as possible the character and appearance of the original. Footnotes translating Aboriginal words have been taken from the glossary of *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (Spencer and Gillen 1899). The numbering of the letters refers to their listing in the archive of the Pitt Rivers Museum, where the holding of the entire series is arranged in chronological order.

2. A. W. Howitt (1830–1908), early Australian anthropologist, joint author (with L. Fison) of *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* (1880); lived in Melbourne.

3. Lorimer Fison (1832–1907), missionary and anthropologist. *Native Tribes of Central Australia* was dedicated to Fison and Howitt.

4. Native name of the so-called wild cat (*Dasyurus geoffroyi*) that gives its name to a totem.

The ceremonies of his times have been reenacted—Protoplasm lived and flourished in the Alcheringa⁶ and was widely known as a mighty Oknirabata⁷ of the renowned Achilpa of Urrapitchera,⁸ he was afflicted, I say advisedly afflicted with two organs of generation.’

Squeals from the ladies, irreverent but suppressed laughter from the men, the Professor awakes, the class is dismissed, the Prof imbibes some Callo⁹ to relieve a peculiar sinking, and while he sips he mutters, ‘D—n Gillen, d—n the Achilpa, d—n the Oknirabata and, most of all, d—n protoplasm.’

I cannot tell you how much we missed you, personally I felt like a fish out of water and could not settle down to work at my long neglected ‘official duties!’ for some days after you left, if I had not been more than a dozen different sorts of a cast-iron ass I could have run down and had a week with you amongst the Niggers at CW.¹⁰ I could have gone on pretext of inspection but it did not occur to me until it was too late. I am sorry you did not discover glacial drift, but in my ignorance of geology I thought the striated boulder of Crown Point was sufficient to establish Byrnes¹¹ theory and that the discovery of drift at Mt Anderson would simply mean additional evidence. Thanks for sketch and notes on Undiara.¹²

5. A series of ceremonies attendant upon the last of the rites concerned with initiation.

6. Name given to the far-off times in which mythical ancestors of the tribe are supposed to live; colloquially translated as ‘Dreamtime’. Spencer and Gillen were the first to use ‘Dreamtime’ to describe the cosmogonic framework of Aboriginal religion, although in their early writings they restricted themselves largely to the use of indigenous terms such as *alcheringa* and *churinga*. They have been rather unjustly accused of inventing the concept of the Dreamtime through mistranslation of the Arrernte concept (Wolfe 1991), and undoubtedly the phrase itself proved catching. However, recent linguistic and anthropological work by David Wilkins and John Morton has tended to confirm their translations (personal communications). The success of the term reflects the fact that their analysis has been reinforced and developed rather than contradicted by subsequent researchers.

7. An old man learned in tribal customs and tradition and teaches others; literally, ‘great teacher’.

8. Place-name.

9. Possibly an abbreviation of a brand name of whisky (Caledonian?). Alternatively, it may derive from Callibogus, an American mixed drink of rum, spruce beer and molasses (Craigie and Hulbert 1960: 388).

10. Telegraph code for Charlotte Waters, an Overland Telegraph Station.

11. P. M. Byrne (1856–1932), Charlotte Waters telegraph operator, amateur naturalist and friend of both Spencer and Gillen. He was the step-brother of Gillen’s wife, Amelia.

12. Undiara (or Inteera according to Strehlow) was a Southern Arrernte ceremonial site that Spencer visited in January 1897 on his return journey from Alice Springs. See Spencer and Gillen 1899: 193–201, 1912: 93–4.

I am inclined to think the wild dogs who drove in the Okirra¹³ are another lot and not identical with the Aurunicha¹⁴ men. There is no reason why there should not be more than one legend of Kangaroos being driven in, and it is not at all likely that the Niggers at the Engwura would mislead us, Cowle's¹⁵ opinion to the contrary notwithstanding. By the way, did you make enquiries and did you find the hill near Henbury from which the Niggers obtain that black stuff? I will do my best to get further information about Undiarra and if I think it advisable will run out there, though from the account and information you were able to gather I don't think I could add much.

I will follow up lines of enquiry suggested by you in letter—since you left here I have done no anthropology beyond going over some of our Engwura work with the old men. The only scrap of information I have been able to gather is that when suffering rheumatic pains in the legs, women only scarify the fleshy part of the leg beneath the seat of pain, and the flow of blood from the numerous small wounds is said to give relief—you may think this worthwhile noting.

Our old wurley¹⁶ is still intact and has become a happy hunting-ground for snakes. I don't think it has been visited by a Nigger of either sex since you left. Lubras¹⁷ and Picaninnies¹⁸ still give it a wide berth, my wife and I often stroll down there of an evening, the place has a fascination for me and I cannot help wishing that we could live our Engwura life over again though I confess it was an anxious time for me, there was always a danger of the thing bursting up and I dreaded anything of the sort happening, much more for your sake than for my own. One of your first evenings in Melbourne will, of course, be devoted to the veteran Achunpa and his pot-bellied friend,¹⁹ how I do wish I could be with you. I hope you will find time to write me a full account of the meeting and what the old fellows think of our work. I shall be very anxious to get your next letter, the wife and I often discuss my dream²⁰ and when the last mail arrived without a

13. Or Okkirra. A kangaroo (*Macropus rufus*) which gives its name to a totem.

14. Term applied to individuals, both men and women, who lived in the mythical past, and to spirit individuals at the present day, who are regarded as being of a mischievous nature.

15. C. E. Cowle (1863–1922), mounted constable based at Illamurta, informant and collector for both Gillen and Spencer. Guided Spencer to Ayers Rock during the Horn Expedition. Retired in 1903 due to ill health.

16. Shelter used by Gillen and Spencer during their first fieldwork.

17. Aboriginal women.

18. Small or black children. From Spanish *pequeño*.

19. Nicknames for Howitt and Fison respectively. An achunpa is a large lizard (*Varanus giganteus*) which gives its name to a totem.

20. Gillen's dream was to undertake further anthropological fieldwork.

prize from Tattersall²¹ she chortled, but I have given the sacred term Engwura another chance to provide the necessary five thousand, and another lovely little pound goes to Tattersall this mail, if there be a providence who presides over the luck of individuals—let us hope that he has anthropological sympathies. I haven't touched a share since you left, in fact I have sworn off that vice altogether, the calls are stiffening me, and unless there is a move in the market (upwards) very shortly I shall be stone broke. I have promised the wife that I will not touch another share of any description without her sanction and she threatens to write you if I break my word!²²

I was relieved to get your wire saying things at OD²³ were all right for, like you, I was somewhat sceptical, it seemed too much to expect that everything would be saved, hope you will get everything safely to Melbourne. I have boxed up two large cases of shields and all sorts of weapons and sent them down to my brother²⁴ who will look after them until we go down country. Cowle wrote glowingly of his trip with you. It has evidently done him a lot of good but he feels a bit sick at the idea of returning to Illamurta, he bitterly regrets the collapse on the night of his arrival here and I don't think such a thing is likely to occur again, he says nothing about our work except that it is generally understood that I owe most of my information to MC²⁵ Willshire,²⁶ and he expresses a hope that I will 'be manly and above all petty jealousies and acknowledge this in the work'!—Like you he thinks a word of praise would make me unbearably arrogant. His trip to town²⁷ will, I am afraid, be put off owing to his having to collect Govt statistics.

21. Tattersall's sweepstake, founded by George Adams in 1878.

22. Gillen was a compulsive purchaser of mining shares and often lost a substantial proportion of his annual salary in unwise share speculations.

23. Telegraph code for Oodnadatta, the railhead from which goods to and from Alice Springs were trans-shipped.

24. Possibly Gillen's younger brother, Thomas Philip Gillen, storekeeper and mayor of Clare.

25. Mounted Constable.

26. W. H. Willshire (1852–1925). Posted to Alice Springs in 1882, Willshire was associated with a number of 'incidents' involving the injuring and killing of Aborigines. When he and his men attacked a group of sleeping Aborigines near Tempe Downs, killing two men, Gillen committed him to trial for murder, but after great public support Willshire was acquitted. He published *The Aborigines of Central Australia: With Vocabulary of the Dialect of the Alice Springs Natives* (Port Augusta 1888), *The Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* (Adelaide 1895) and *The Land of the Dawning: Being Facts Gleaned from Cannibals in the Australian Stone Age* (1896). Willshire referred to volcanic places in his imaginative book of 1895. Cowle was thus being ironic.

27. Adelaide.

What is this we hear about you swelling around Crown Point in a pair of beaver moles?²⁸ I heard that you were so much engaged in admiring your beaver-clad legs that you could not be persuaded to take an interest in anything else. I thought you above personal vanity. Cowle tells me that I was often the topic of conversation, that you all strove to do me justice (without mercy), and he reckoned that he would not be clear of the CW Creek before he would be placed on the dissecting table and quivering under the knives of you and Pado.²⁹ I am afraid your visits to the interior and your intimate association with the Natives have had a demoralizing effect. I am simply spoiling for an argument and often wondered how you and Byrne got on at CW, you could not differ on political subjects, he would not talk anthropology.³⁰ Did you manage to raise an argument at all? Or did you simply content yourself with all-round destructive criticism? I notice your democratic leader Turner³¹ has taken a Knighthood, I thought him above that sort of thing though I know most Victorians hanker after that tawdry *extinction*. The busted city of the boomster Knights. Some of these days a Governor of Victoria with scientific instincts will make you Sir Baldwin, holy alcheringa, what an awful thought, if this ever happens Byrne, Cowle and I will meet and for a solid week place you upon the dissecting table.³² It is becoming the fashion for literary and scientific men to accept titles, if Brassey³³ takes an interest in anthropology it may be done within a year, again holy Alcheringa, I don't think I could stand it.

I shall be glad to see English Criticism on Vol IV.³⁴ If you have spare copies send them to me and I can return them if necessary. I have not seen the Age³⁵ criticism on the work—let me know if the negatives travelled down safely. I am sending you a few photos this mail, but nothing specially good.

28. Trousers. Beaverteen was a cotton twilled cloth with uncut pile; mole was a type of fustian with a soft surface like a moleskin. Strong cotton trousers known as moleskin were the customary dress of rural workers and miners.

29. Patrick (Pado) M. Byrne.

30. Byrne was in fact interested in anthropology. He published 'an excellent account' (Spencer and Gillen 1927: 454) of the Kurdaitcha custom (1895).

31. Sir Giles Turner (1851–1916), Victorian Premier and Commonwealth Treasurer.

32. Spencer was knighted in 1916, four years after Gillen's death.

33. First Earl Brassey (1836–1918), Governor of Victoria 1895–9.

34. The anthropology volume of the Horn Expedition Reports (Vol. IV), which included a paper by Gillen. All the volumes were edited by Spencer.

35. *The Age*, Melbourne newspaper established in 1854.

About a fortnight ago I discovered that four of the Erleara,³⁶ Blind George, Young Sambo, Tom (the King's³⁷ son) and Tom Crib, had made a raid on Gunter's³⁸ goats, this happened on race day and when I made the discovery the offenders were all away. I at once stopped down rations and as Kelly did not move on the matter I called up the old men and told them that until the offenders were brought in to me there would be no supplies of baccy etc. Yesterday they came in and without tying them up I sent them to Kelly for punishment; no one here, except myself, believed that they would go to the camp knowing as they did that they were to have a hiding.³⁹ The fact of them yielding themselves up for a hiding staggered Kelly and has given him an exaggerated opinion of my power over the darkies—Field, Besley and Squire⁴⁰ pooh-poohed the idea of the boys going to the camp of their own free will—you can imagine how I have been chortling to myself while preserving an outward appearance of unconcern—hold up your fingers!

The weather continues horribly dry, feed is growing scarce and our stock are beginning to look very skinny. I am going to relay the iron troughing tomorrow and erect a whip⁴¹ for waterdrawing, there is no indication of rain and I am beginning to think that we are in for a drought.

The Niggers mourned your departure and are constantly making enquiries about you, your stay here must ever be to them a red-letter period⁴² in the history of the tribe, never again will bacca be so plentiful or flour so liberally dealt out. The old King wants to know why you cannot come and live here when I go south and I tell him that the ancient Achunpa could not spare you.

I paid Wallis⁴³ your account and am enclosing receipt, also statement showing how you stand with me, hope it won't make you feel faint! When you write to England remember me most kindly to your wife and send my love to the little ones. You will soon have them with you again, don't forget to send that photo for the wife.

36. Name applied to the fully initiated men who have passed through the Engwura ceremony.

37. 'King' was an Aboriginal informant of Gillen and a tribal elder.

38. Gunter, Alice Springs hotel-keeper and owner and manager of the Stuart Arms Hotel.

39. This suggests that Kelly, the policeman, punished minor offences with a 'hiding' (the lash?). If so, it was illegal.

40. Telegraph Department staff at Alice Springs.

41. Winding pulley.

42. This phrase came originally from church festivals, which were printed in red in calendars, and it was used colloquially to refer to happy or lucky occasions.

43. Frank and Albert Wallis established one of the first stores in Alice Springs, later known as Wallis Fogarty.

Let me know how you found old Winnecke⁴⁴ and how he got on with the great Horn.⁴⁵ I was sorry to learn from the papers that the latter is in ill health for I believe he is, after all, a real good fellow wrapped up in a disagreeable crust. Don't intend writing to Stirling⁴⁶ until he returns, I am still a wee bit sore about the symbolic business.⁴⁷ Besley is still as enthusiastic as ever over the gold mines and spends the whole of his salary on them, his spare time is spent in panning off crushed rock. Woolcock⁴⁸ stayed with us a few days and seems a very nice young fellow, he is a student of Prof. Rennie's⁴⁹ about whom he talks enthusiastically. Kelly tells me the *Bulletin*⁵⁰ of January 9th has a paragraph stating that you and I are at Alice Springs engaged upon 'a monumental work on the Central Australian Natives'. The paragraph is couched in appreciative terms—Kelly says they predict that 'the value of the book, some years hence, will be enormous'—I'll never say another unkind word of the *Bulletin*!! Certainly they must have a copy for review. Most kind and appreciative letters from Gordon,⁵¹

44. Charles Winnecke (1857–1902), explorer, surveyor and expedition leader, member of the Horn Expedition.

45. W. A. Horn (1841–1922), mining magnate, pastoralist and politician, financed Horn Scientific Exploring Expedition. Winnecke and Horn were disputing the publication of the account of the Horn Expedition. Winnecke had decided to publish separately under the aegis of the South Australian government. Horn felt that Winnecke was wrongly presenting himself as the leader of the Expedition in his accounts.

46. Professor and Sir Edward C. Stirling CMG, FRS (1849–1919), physiologist at University of Adelaide, member of the South Australia Legislative Assembly 1884–7, director of South Australian Museum, Adelaide 1884–1912 and member of the Horn Expedition.

47. Stirling and Gillen had at first collaborated on the anthropological part of the Horn Expedition Reports, but as the Spencer–Gillen partnership began to yield anthropological results, this collaboration weakened. Gillen published a separate anthropological appendix to the report and had not contributed significantly to the Stirling section of the report (which was edited by Spencer). However, during a visit to Stirling in Adelaide, Gillen had alluded to the Arrernte totemic system and its symbolic significance, which Stirling then incorporated into his account.

48. J. G. Woolcock (1874–1957), metallurgist student of E. H. Rennie (see next footnote), presumably on his way to the Arltunga Goldfields, where Gillen had investments. The government was building a cyanide treatment plant there and he may have been involved in its establishment, as he was in charge of the South Australia government cyanide works at Mount Torrens in 1896.

49. E. H. Rennie (1852–1927), Angas Professor of Chemistry, University of Adelaide in 1885; founded South Australian School of Mines.

50. The *Bulletin*, an influential, radical weekly journal founded in 1880 and produced in Sydney; chief organ of Australian nationalism and republicanism. Nicknamed the 'Bushman's Bible', its motto was 'Temper democratic, bias offensively Australian'.

51. Sir J. H. Gordon (1850–1923), Chief Secretary in 1893 Kingston government; Attorney-General 1899–1903.

Ex Chief Sec, and others to whom I sent copies of Horn paper. Gordon writes, 'I need not say that I am sure this will form a most valuable contribution to Scientific Knowledge and will carry your name down long after those of politicians are forgotten', and still I do hanker after a political career and Gordon knows it. I quite expect that when you get fairly settled and have time to review our work that I shall be inundated with a million or two questions. If you love me, keep off that infernal table of relationship, the sight of it in its tan enclosure here, often gives me a cold shiver.

My kind regards to French,⁵² Fison and Howitt. Tell French I'll send him some eggs shortly. Your collecting tin is slowly filling. Now old man I must scratch a few lines to my own people. Hope you feel benefited by your stay with us—it was a delight to my wife and I to have you here and we shall always look back upon the two months you spent here as amongst the brightest and most enjoyable we have spent at AG.⁵³ I do wish the visit could be repeated next year.

Yours always faithfully,

F. J. G.

Letter 29

This and the next letter demonstrate the detailed data collection carried out by Gillen and the huge variety of subjects upon which they gathered information. They also show the way in which Spencer and Gillen processed their field information. Both letters were written in Alice Springs while Spencer was in Melbourne.

Alice Springs
June 18th 1897

My dear Spencer,

I feel almost inclined not to write you at all this mail. I have just done up and posted by registered parcel of about 110 pages of closely written notes which will, after you have got over some preliminary cursing, I think, gladden your heart—and I want you to get at them with the least possible delay. These are the matters dealt

52. Charles French (1868–1950), naturalist and friend of Spencer.

53. Telegraph code for Alice Springs.

with: marches of wild dogs, Yarumpa⁵⁴—two columns—Erlia,⁵⁵ Unjiamba,⁵⁶ Ulpmirka⁵⁷ and their two women giving account of their origin—Irriakura,⁵⁸ Erlia the poor, Udnirringita⁵⁹—and a lot of information about their country—Ullakupera,⁶⁰ Amunga quinyirquinya,⁶¹ Okira, Unthippa⁶² dancing women, Echunpa—four ceremonies all near—notes on Erathippa,⁶³ origin and history of woman who sprung up there—complete udnirringita intichiuma⁶⁴—very full account [and] much new important information about Iartna⁶⁵ and Ariltha⁶⁶—instances of change of class and totem—first account of man's origin after great salt water subsided, little lizards Amunga quinyerquinya came made men from rudimentary creatures, Ullakupera followed, later period also making men from rudimentary creatures, erroneously described in Horn volume as a species of porcupine—voluminous notes on Churinga⁶⁷ and Nanja⁶⁸—further notes, fresh

54. The honey ant (*Camponotus inflatus*), which gives its name to a totem.

55. An emu and important totem group.

56. The flower of a species of *Hakea*, which gives its name to a totem.

57. Term applied to a boy before he has been circumcised. Also used in connection with groups of individuals of certain totems who are the descendants of ancestors, who in the mythical past were not circumcised as the other members of the totem were.

58. A favourite food, the bulb of *Cyperus rotundus*, which gives its name to a totem.

59. One of the larval insect forms called witchetty grubs. The name is derived from the term *udnirringa*, the name of the bush on which the insect feeds. It gives its name to an important totem. This is the totem to which Gillen (and later Spencer) were affiliated.

60. A little hawk, which gives its name to an important totem.

61. A small fly-eating lizard.

62. Name applied to certain women of mythical times who are supposed to have danced across the country from west to east. The *unthippa* dance at the ceremony of circumcision commemorates these women.

63. A stone representing the spot where a sacred pole was implanted and where a child went into the earth together with a number of *churinga*. Spirit children emanate from the stone.

64. Increase ceremony associated with the totem. Spencer and Gillen defined *intichiuma* as a sacred ceremony performed by the members of a local totemic group with the object of increasing the number of the totemic animal or plant (Spencer and Gillen 1899: 170–9).

65. Male circumcision ceremony (*ibid.*: 218–51).

66. Sub-incision ceremony (*ibid.*: 251–60).

67. Term implying something sacred or secret, applied both to an object and to the quality possessed by it. It is frequently used for one of the sacred stones or sticks of the Arrernte tribe which are the equivalents of the bull-roarers of other tribes. The *churinga* (modern spelling *tjurunga*) are manifestations of the sacred world of the Dreaming. Characteristically, they take

information Undiara—adoptions of present class and marriage system—knocking out teeth Alail-lynga important ceremony, details probably point back to a time when descent was maternal—boring of nose with ceremony—cutting men’s hair—more evidence (I think) of maternal descent—magic—Arungquiltha,⁶⁹ one form of which you long ago expected I would find—menses custom—making doctors—anointing with fat to develop girls’ breasts—totem association with special animals and birds—sun myth, sex and relationship to, recognized by various classes—therapeutics—custom bringing about reconciliation [of] groups opposed to each other—sexual promiscuity with restrictions only affecting certain close blood relations, customs relating to giving blood—and a mass of general information including replies to questions.

It was a happy inspiration that caused you to start me working out the wanderings of the various totems, and much of the information now going to you is the outcome of that work. If we had possessed this information before the Engwura it would have helped us to a better understanding of the various ceremonies, but even now it throws a flood of light upon them and will help you to write definitely as to their import. We know that each ceremony represented an Alcheringa myth which is carefully preserved by the old men. There is a special ceremony connected with each individual, and the knowledge of these ceremonies is a never-ending source of profit to the old men, who, as in the case of Jim, will exact Chowarilya⁷⁰ before showing the ceremony.

the form of stone or wooden objects with incised designs representing ancestral beings and events. *Churinga* can also be used more inclusively to refer to words and dances and other manifestations of ancestral beings. The process of Spencer and Gillen’s thinking about *churinga* comes out well in a later letter from Gillen to Spencer in which he writes: ‘When first of all did the Churinga come in—that question is a poser but you will find it dealt with in my notes — it dates back, I think, before alcheringa man and I am inclined to think that originally it was meant to express the spiritual part of the alcheringa animal or man, the meaning of the term I take to be “sacred”—in the sense perhaps that the sacramental wafer is sacred to the Roman Catholic—A thing is Churinga that is everything—(Churinga spelt in capital letters please)—there can be nothing impossible where Churinga are concerned—Men sprung from Churinga, that is from something sacred in the animal or man, just as the Virgin Mary appears at Lourdes, though unless you want to bring down upon me the anathema of the Holy Church don’t quote me as saying so’ (Alice Springs, 30th July 1897).

68. Term applied to a natural object, such as a tree or stone, that arose to mark the spot where an ancestor of the mythical past went into the ground, leaving behind his spirit part associated with his *churinga*. The tree or stone is the *nanja* of that spirit and also of the human being in the form of whom it undergoes reincarnation. The *churinga* is the *churinga nanja* of the human being.

69. A magic evil influence. The term is applied both to the evil influence and to the material object in which it resides.

70. An offering of food made to men who have officiated at certain ceremonies. After its presentation, the ban on silence previously existing between the donor and recipient is removed.

I am simply delighted with the way you are dealing with our material, it's going to be a *great* book, make no mistake about it—I am simply saturated with native lore and so full of the subject that I am almost tempted to jump on the mail and run across to Melbourne. This Engwura has widened out and extended my influence with these people enormously, and old men are coming in from all parts to see me, getting information is comparatively easy and I think you need not fear that I shall leave much for those who tread in our footsteps to find out.

Two things baffle every attempt at solution. First, why a man speaks to his Ungaraitcha and not to his Quitia,⁷¹ and second, the Umbilyirakira⁷² ceremony of the Engwura—the term Umbilyirakira has only one meaning, and that is a child fresh born. For the life of me I cannot get at the meaning of the ceremony, but the men who fell down and covered up the Churinga bundle before the women are supposed to be tumbling down. That is, they are dying. This thing has worried me awfully and I have spent hours and hours trying to solve it. I quite expect when you have read my notes you will throw them down and say, 'Why, in the name of the flaming alcheringa, didn't this muddy-minded Hiberian find all this out before?'—but you'll get over all that, and I shan't be within reach of—Yes. Your just wrath—and you'll end by chortling over them in the good old style I know so well.

It is a most fortunate thing that you decided to put the notes roughly into form before setting down to write the magnum opus. I dare say I have sent you a lot of needless detail; I have thought it best to copy out my rough notes without any attempt at condensation because in condensing, I might leave out something which to your trained mind *would* appear important. In the Chambers Pillar myth you will require to make an alteration: Rulipita was a Purula man, and the Pillar arose when he tumbled down in the Alcheringa.⁷³ You will find with the manuscript drawings from Emily Gap⁷⁴ with explanatory notes, also drawings from Quiurupa⁷⁵ with ditto—I spent a night and half a day with the old King at Quiurupa and felt that I was heading upon historic ground. The name is applied to a stretch of country some square miles in extent, and each of the Ulpmirka Quiurupa (by the way, these notes supply information as to the origins of Ulpmirka and

71. Elder and younger 'tribal sister' respectively.

72. Newborn child.

73. '[Chamber's Pillar] has naturally attracted the attention of the natives, who account for it by saying that in the far-away times they call Alchera, there lived a very great fighting man who journeyed westwards across the country, killing all the men whom he met with his stone knife and taking all their women captive. One night, on his way back, he stopped here and, for his sins, he and the women were turned into pillars of stone ...Chamber's Pillar represents the man and the turrets of Castle Rock the women' (Spencer 1928: 55).

74. Emily Gap, or Unthurqua, is a gorge a few miles to the east of Alice Springs (Spencer and Gillen 1912: 256).

75. Place-name.

Arakurta)⁷⁶ ceremonies we saw were especially connected with certain spots often some miles apart.

There are some more drawings at another place in the district, which I hope to get and send to you next mail. Next week I am off on an expedition to the great Oknanakilla⁷⁷ place of the Yarumpa at Ilyaba, Hamilton Peak, where I hear there are some drawings never seen by white men. Some old fellows from there, who recently paid me a visit, are anxious for me to go out and see their Churinga—they are of our Nakrakia⁷⁸ and I intend taking Sambo and Jim, the latter I have scarcely seen since the Engwura, he has been working for the Police. By the way, Winnecke has not sent his tobacco.

Splendid letters, full of generous appreciation, from Messrs Howitt and Fison, it made my sluggish blood tingle to read these letters. Fison's enthusiasm I was prepared for, but not for Howitt's. Fison says he is convinced that you and I could travel through the tribes of Australia and do similar work which no other two men could do—Mr Howitt says the work must not be allowed to stop here, and both pay tributes of admiration to your splendid abilities and delicately remind me that I am fortunate in having such a colleague—I fully realize this; have realized it all along, so don't, pray, talk about what might have happened if I had been associated with a KCMG⁷⁹ instead of a 'common or garden Professor'—you were the one possible colleague—without you the work would never have been done and I have taken care, in my letters to Howitt and Fison, to point this out, and further added that if the work possesses the high scientific value they say it does, that value is entirely due to you. You are in no way responsible for my refusing the Post offered by Govt,⁸⁰ if you had strongly advised me to accept, I would not have taken it—I am too deeply interested in this work to leave it until I feel that there is nothing more of importance to find out, it grows upon me daily. When you were here, and for long after you left, my heart was not really in the work, I was suffering from the one great sorrow of my lifetime;⁸¹ and I could not work with that enthusiasm, without which nothing much can be accomplished. I did not get fairly into swing again until I started tracking up the Achilpa—since then all

76. Arakurta is a status term applied to young men between circumcision and sub-incision.

77. A local totem centre; an area of country which is supposed to be inhabited by the spirits of ancestral individuals. The spirits of each local centre belong to one totem.

78. The term applied in the Arrernte tribe to individuals who belong to the same moiety of the tribe as ego. Thus a Panunga or Bulthara man speaks of the Panunga and Bulthara as his Nakrakia (see note 93).

79. Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George.

80. Gillen is referring to the post of Resident Stipendiary Magistrate at Port Augusta. He was offered several other posts while at Alice Springs.

81. The sudden death of his brother Peter Paul Gillen, South Australia's Commissioner of Land.

the old enthusiasm has returned. I have cultivated a patience and tenacity of purpose which makes Job's efforts commonplace.

There are, of course, many more traditions of wandering hordes, some of which I shall get later on. The possession of this information has familiarized me with the personal history (alcheringa) of series of men, all through the tribe, and it has already helped me to gain information. The old men delight in raking up their traditions when they really believe that I look upon them with sympathetic credulity—Horn states that they are entirely without traditions and yet there is not a remarkable natural feature in the country without a special tradition. Tradition—why, it is the very breath of their nostrils—that is—it was—before the white man came amongst them and trampled tradition and everything else that was good out of them.

You will, I am sure, be delighted to find that these notes enable us to divide the alcheringa roughly into four periods:

1st, the subsidence of the waters and the coming of the lizards and their man making, from rudimentary creatures without classes.

2nd, the coming of the Ullakupera, making men in same manner, introducing lartna with the knife and conferring classes.

3rd, the coming of the Achilpa and introduction of the Ariltha rite.

4th, the settling of the classes and the establishment of present system of marriage and relationship by the wise Oknirabata of various Emu groups.

In my letters to Howitt and Fison I have stated that we can now divide up the alcheringa roughly—but I have not gone into particulars. I have not had time to get you a rubbing of Udnirringita Churinga for this mail but will send one or two next mail. By post I have sent a lot of Anschutz⁸² negatives and one half plate of a man and his wives in camp, it appears to me to be the best of two plates which I took. Let me know what you think of the prints and say if you require any of the negatives, the half plate pictures of man throwing spear and boomerang appear to me to be very good but you may think them too stiff.⁸³ I could not get a picture of Lulu's⁸⁴ piccaninny. The little beggar has given up crawling, and all the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't induce her to take to it again. All the Anschutz negatives will be improved by intensification. I have sold the instrument for £11 and was glad to get rid of it. I never could work it properly.

I have sent you a little box per parcels post containing 5 or 6 painted Chillara⁸⁵—two knouts (I thought I had given you some of these), poison stick

82. A make of camera.

83. Possibly the photograph shown in Spencer 1928: Fig. 111–12 (spear-throwing).

84. On the 1901–2 Expedition Gillen met Lulu again: 'poor old Lulu who is now a widow with six children[,] Tom her husband having died a few months ago ... I find that many have died since I left Alice Springs' (Gillen 1968: 45).

85. A broad band worn across the forehead from ear to ear and made of strands of opossum fur.

a-la [*sic*] irrunturinga⁸⁶ and two ditto of Ipira tribe. In the same box you will find a bottle containing Amunga-quinyir-quinya lizards—I could not procure a specimen of the second lizard of that name, but it is about same size and very similar, only that it has a red tail.⁸⁷ The bottle also contains a small bird which is connected with a native myth, for particulars of which see Notes. Box also contains Wupira ornament⁸⁸ worn by men after becoming Urliara.⁸⁹ All the other things you require will go to you in due course. You will find amongst the Notes an account of the Sun ceremony—that great performance ran away with all my undattha⁹⁰—the meaning of this word is flower—but I hope to get some on the Ilyaba Exped'n when I also hope to annex a lot of loot of which you shall have a fair share.

By this mail I have written to Winnecke for a good map of the country between Charlotte Waters and Barrow Creek. When this reaches me I will plot down, approximately, the various paths of wandering hordes—the Horn map is not sufficiently extensive. Stirling's account of the distribution of the tribes is fairly accurate, I am responsible for the errors—for Chitchica substitute Ipira—the Ilyowera join the Arunta on their North Eastern boundary skirting the Ipira and Kytiche on the East and running right up to the Frew River. I will as far as possible plot in the territories occupied by the various tribes but it will be only roughly approximate. If there is one thing more than another that you cannot get a nigger to explain with any degree of accuracy, it is the boundaries of his tribe. If you refer to the tables of various class systems in your possession you will find positions of tribes indicated—I cannot define the exact boundaries of any of the tribes. The Arunta are flanked on the East side by a tribe called Manie whose organization is said to be similar to the Aruntas. The term written Apmura⁹¹ should be apmoa-ura.

Do you understand that Oknanakilla was only established by wandering hordes when they either deposited men or Churinga? I wired you to this effect but you do not mention it in your letter—this accounts for the association of the Udnirringita

86. Irrunturinga is the general term applied to spirit individuals. Of them, certain special forms have distinct names, such as Ulthana or Arumburinga.

87. This species is known today as *Morethia ruficauda* (see Spencer 1896, part 2: 144, pl. 10–13).

88. Worn by the men at the close of the Engwura ceremony, and consisting of a strand of fur string, tipped with a little tuft of the tail tips of the rabbit-kangaroo.

89. Name applied to the fully initiated men who have passed through the Engwura ceremony.

90. Down derived either from the involucre hairs of some plant such as a species of *Portulaca* or from birds, especially the eagle-hawk. This down is characteristically used in sacred ceremonies which, with rare exceptions, the women are not allowed to see.

91. A small wooden trough carried by the Alatumja during the performance of the Intichiuma ceremony of the witchetty grub totem.

and other totems with the Achilpa. There is a ceremony associated with every Camping place, and unless men or Churinga are left at a place that ceremony is the property of the people in whose country it was performed—for instance the Achilpa camped and made Quabara⁹² without leaving men or Churinga, at certain places in the Udnirringita country—and the achilpa ceremonies associated with such camps belong to the Udnirringita.

At one such ceremony described in this mail's notes, you will notice how very marked is the separation of Nakrakia and Mulyanaka.⁹³ It used to bother us a great deal, as to how so many people, of different totems, came to be specially interested in Achilpa ceremonies. You have aroused my curiosity, you say my friend, the Argus,⁹⁴ says, 'We are set in a place where we are commanded to speak the truth.' Has there been some reference to our work in that paper, if so why on earth didn't you post it along? Papers are always acceptable and particularly when they contain references to our work.

I have written out a document for Gleeson,⁹⁵ empowering you to act on his behalf and he is sending it to you this mail. I took his photo yesterday but the weather was something awful and the plate turned out a fraud. He has not communicated with his people for 25 years or over and they are not aware that he has lost an eye so that the photo would not be of much value—he is deeply grateful to you for your kindness and could hardly believe that you would go to so much trouble.

Cowle wrote me a line from Adelaide in which he said Porter⁹⁶ was flowing freely. Let me know how the old boy gets on in Melbourne—I hope he won't run riot but I'm very much afraid. The Minister for the N.T., Holder,⁹⁷ is greatly pleased with his work amongst the blacks and the Chief Secy,⁹⁸ who is head of the Police Dept, will, I think, reward him in some way. My wife was delighted with 'A Cathedral Courtship',⁹⁹ she has talked so much about it—in the few moments which I have been able to spare her! that I am quite anxious to read the

92. Name applied generally to the sacred ceremonies which, at the present day, only initiated men may witness and take part in. These ceremonies are associated with the totems.

93. Mulyanaka is the term applied in the Arrernte tribe to individuals who belong to the other moiety of the tribe than ego. Thus a Panunga or Bulthara man speaks of the Purula and Kumara as Mulyanuka (see note 78).

94. A conservative Melbourne newspaper.

95. Gleeson worked at Alice Springs.

96. The type of beer.

97. Sir F. W. Holder (1850–1909), formerly South Australian Premier. From 1894, Holder was Treasurer and Minister in charge of the Northern Territories.

98. J. V. O'Loghlin (1852–1925), South Australia Chief Secretary 1896–9.

99. Book by Kate Douglas Wiggin (London: Gay and Bird 1893).

book. Bri and Jack¹⁰⁰ are backyarding their books, I remonstrated one day and Bri gravely informed me that Pufessa told Mama to put them in the back yard. On this particular occasion he and Jack were converting one of the books into a packsaddle for a motherless kid which I found on my trip to Quiurupa and which Dolly¹⁰¹ has reared on a bottle.

Long letter from Stirling this mail, he had a high old time, but too hurried, at home. Kintore¹⁰² actually enquired about me. Stirling was made honorary fellow of the Anthropol. Soc.¹⁰³ and thinking that they would probably confer the same honor upon me, he did not put me up for membership of the Society. I chaffed him about saying that he doubted if there was much in the way of ethnological novelties to find out about these tribes and he replies seriously, 'By the bye, lest I forget, referring to your criticisms on a supposed statement of mine in the Horn book that there was nothing more to be learned about your blacks, I cannot find that I said this. What I did say in one place was that I did not think it would *ever be possible* to find out the *real* intrinsic reason for such fundamental traits as the practice of circumcision or the repugnance to incest. This at least is what I meant—not that there is nothing more to be found out. On the contrary, I was always conscious of how much there was to learn and the Reviewer, at least in Natural Science, says I am too modest.'

He sent me a copy of the Daily Chron.¹⁰⁴ review which I had previously received from you, and he tells me it was written by Edward Clodd,¹⁰⁵ with whom he dined in London. I had just been reading Clodd's 'Story of Primitive Man' when I received Stirling's letter. He wants me to work out some queries originated by the great Darwin whose son,¹⁰⁶ a Cambridge Professor, is now continuing his father's work. I am enclosing a copy of the queries—they will require careful attention to obtain accurate results—shall I send replies to him? I have told him that my time is too fully occupied just now to go into the questions properly. He writes very nicely about our work and says he feels sure it will be

100. Brian and Jack, Gillen's sons.

101. Gillen's Arrernte housemaid, Aritcheuka.

102. A. H. T. K. F. Kintore (1850–1930): South Australian Governor from 1889. Gillen met him in 1891 when he undertook a publicised tour of Australia with Stirling, following the Overland Telegraph line.

103. Anthropological Institute in London, later to become the Royal Anthropological Institute. Gillen was never accorded more than Corresponding Member status by the Institute, although both Spencer and Stirling were Fellows.

104. The *Daily Chronicle*, an English newspaper established in 1887, leaning politically towards Gladstonian Liberalism.

105. 1840–1930; prominent folklorist.

106. Probably George Howard Darwin (1845–1912), Professor of astronomy and experimental philosophy, Cambridge University, and son of Charles Darwin.

a magnum opus¹⁰⁷—but his expressions appear to me to be studied and there is—I fancy—an undercurrent of coldness, he lets himself loose and writes quite differently when talking of his home experiences. Perhaps he thinks we should have taken him into our confidence earlier.

The drawings made by Eylmann¹⁰⁸ at Aneara Cave near Barrow Creek belong to Yarumpa totem. The *ilkinya*,¹⁰⁹ which we saw on the backs of the man at the completion of the Engwura, are not, so far as I can learn, preserved on rocks. They say the old men know them and certainly the Udnirringita designs painted by the old King on his Apmoaura are not preserved except in the heads of the old men. After my return from Hamilton Peak I intend running out to old Ullakupera's country where I hear there are some markings in a cave—I have shown drawings in Horn volume to two Undiara men. One, an old fellow, and he cannot give any explanation. If the design you referred to particularly is close to that of Emu and tracks, it is probably the *Churinga ilpintira*¹¹⁰ of the Emu *intitchiuma*¹¹¹—I have never seen anything so elaborate as the Emu drawing at the *intitchiuma* ceremonies of that totem and I cannot hear of any similar drawings in connection with other *intitchiuma*. Eylmann is somewhere in the Territory, I have not heard of him for months but if he returns I will convey your message. I think you would like him, he is an Emir Pasha sort of individual.

Cheque to hands, thanks, I haven't had time to see whether the amount is correct. It's like your core cheek to talk of 'the remarkable vagaries in postal and telegraphic matters in SA'. Evidently you are not aware that the SA post and Tel depts are the best managed institutions of their kind in Australia—and yours are notoriously the worst. All the federal big guns paid a tribute to Todd's¹¹²

107. The first Spencer and Gillen book, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899).

108. E. Eylmann, German scientist who published an ethnographic work after his travels in the Northern Territory (*Die Eingeborenen der Kolonie Südaustralien*, Berlin 1908). Spencer and Gillen acknowledged Eylmann's drawings in *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899: 631): 'For these [drawings] which are represented in Figure 131 nos 1–5 we are indebted to Dr E Eylmann who, at our request and at considerable trouble to himself, most kindly paid a special visit to the spot which lies some distance away from Barrow Creek and took careful copies and measurements of the designs . . . [They] lie in the country occupied by the Warramunga tribe, there is a small cave at the end of the Crawford Range . . . most of the drawings are outside the cave . . . painted on a red background (artificial) with a white or black pigment . . . we have not been able to ascertain the meaning . . . beyond the fact that they are sacred and associated with the honey-ant totem . . .' See Eylmann's note on 17 April 1897 in Gillen's notebooks, Vol. 3, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide (09–G47).

109. Sacred designs associated with different totems.

110. Special name given to the sacred design of the emu totem drawn upon the ground.

111. See Spencer and Gillen 1899: 179–85.

112. Sir Charles Todd (1826–1910): South Australian Postmaster General, responsible for the construction of the Overland Telegraph line in 1870–2 and Gillen's boss.

splendid administration, and there was some talk of getting his assistance in placing your institutions on a similar sound footing.

Please don't forget to send me a copy or two of *Nature* containing the Engwura paper,¹¹³ they'll jump at it, I'm sure. I wish I could have been present when you were before the Royal Society. I would much like to have heard you. I am glad the slides turned out well, could you induce Henderson¹¹⁴ to make a set from my plates? Those I made are not up to much. You could fund him in material and debit me. What would be the cost of a little camera like the one you had on Horn Expd'n and had it a fixed focus? I may go in for one—some pictures I took with Cowle's camera a day or two ago look very well though the detail is not good, the lens being of poor quality. The films are useless in summer months but answer very well in the cold weather. Promiscuity entirely free of restrictions appears to have been the rule up to the time of the coming of the Emu reformers. The old map in two pieces, which I got from Winnecke, is unfortunately no longer in my possession—I don't in the least mind Stirling making use of any information he gets from Cowle, no information that the latter could give would in any way discount the value of our work. I predict that Dr Tylor would be enthusiastic about the book and that McMillans¹¹⁵ will jump at it and give you *carte blanche* as to illustrations. Further than this I am beginning to feel that it will find many readers outside the scientific world—that it will pay handsomely in fact.¹¹⁶ You are dealing with the material in an attractive manner and there is not a dull line in the pages you have penned—your faculty for lucid explanation, free of obtuse technical terms, delights me, and I thank Providence who gained me such a colleague. I shall glory in it if the book brings you distinction as I think it must do if Howitt and Fison are not merely rosy optimists. I am glad you know Balfour,¹¹⁷ his letter pleased me greatly.

An Ikuntira calls his son-in-law Gammona or Etnia,¹¹⁸ synonymous terms but surely that is in the tables? I haven't time to look—judging by your wire of last week the table is giving you some trouble, probably owing to my lack of ability to explain things lucidly. I don't think you'll find a flaw in it—I certainly cannot. Will send more Chillara next mail and now will not keep you longer from the Notes—pray let me down easy. Our kindest regards and best wishes to Mrs

113. See Spencer and Gillen 1897.

114. Anketell Henderson, Melbourne University architect and keen amateur photographer.

115. Spencer and Gillen's publishers. It was Sir James Frazer who arranged for Macmillan to publish their first book.

116. 'Field and I had each a wager with Gillen before he left Alice Spgs—he bet us each that neither you nor he would reap a penny profit from the great work in five years...' (C. E. Cowle to Spencer, 10 June 1899, Pitt Rivers Museum Spencer papers, Box 1A letter 33).

117. Henry Balfour, curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum.

118. Kinship terms.

Spencer and yourself and love to the Kiddies. I shall be anxious until I know that the notes are safely in your hands.

Yours very sincerely,

F. J. Gillen

Letter 42

Alice Springs
7th August 1898

My dear Spencer,

It is Sunday night, the mail leaves tomorrow morning and I have all my letters to write so this will probably be the skimpiest epistle with which I have ever afflicted you. Of course you'll laugh, but it's a solid fact that for a week or more I have not had time, day or night, to call my soul my own. First of all a double lartna, then an expedition from Ulathirka (Mt Heughlin) group of Udnirringita returning Churinga which were borrowed from this group some four or five years ago. I have not had time to copy my pencil notes but will endeavour to do so before next mail (always provided that official duties are not too heavy). I am sending you photo of the two Wartja¹¹⁹ painted with totem ilkinya. Please note that the inferiority of the picture (and of others) is due to bad light—photo of men sitting in Apulla¹²⁰ singing the lalira,¹²¹ something I have not seen them do before. The lalira¹²² (in this instance the knife which I use for castrating lambs) was painted in the same manner as the stone implement. If you look closely at the print you will notice [it] sticking in the ground in centre of group—the picture is instantaneous. This singing of the lalira and the elaborate painting of a shield with totem ilkinya which was subsequently painted on the back of one of the Wartja were the only two features of the ceremony which were new to me. I subsequently bought the shield and have sent it down—yesterday—with some of my collection and household treasures. The returning of Churinga is full of new

119. Name given to the novice during the ceremonies attendant upon that of circumcision after he has been painted but before the actual operation.

120. The ground on which the ceremony of circumcision is performed.

121. 'Singing the lalira': chanting a ritual incantation that located the *lalira* (the knife) in mythological space (see next note).

122. Large stone knives made of flaked quartzite.

and interesting matter which I dare not touch on here lest I should launch out for half the night—I do wish, old fellow, that you were here with your facile pen and rich vocabulary so that the subject might be done justice.¹²³ It is when a matter of this sort crops up that I feel my whatitsname, I haven't time to look for the word I want—suffice it to say that this returning of Churinga is very different to that previously described. I have been in this up to my neck, my 'Guts' (as Cowle would say!) have been undatthaed and poked with reeking Churinga until my shirts are a sight no Alcheringa man would be ashamed of.

Talk about knowing everything about the Arunda, I shall not be surprised if some of the most valuable work be done during the next twelve months. You thought the examining of Churinga at the Engwura impressive but really it was nothing compared with what has been occurring here for some days. A messenger arrived a day ahead of the Expedition and on the day upon which the latter arrived the old Oknirabata and the King each painted a design upon a shield, one represented the coming of the Udnirringita of the Alcheringa from Ulathirka and the other the Alcheringa place etc of the Oknirabata. These shields were kept carefully covered up until after the stones were handed over and then each one was pressed hard against the stomachs of all the men present. I have the shields safely in my den, you can have one, the decorations are white on a red ground and tufts of red undattha. These udnirringita stone Churinga are the finest lot I have ever seen together, many of them are unmarked but each one is as familiar to the old fellows as if it were branded with an N. I have of course taken some photos,¹²⁴ mostly inferior and tonight being short of developer and with the result that two pictures which should have been first class are almost too thin to print from. I have however one fair negative of the bundle of Churinga, oval shaped and about a ft 6 in length, resting on the Alatunja's¹²⁵ knees.¹²⁶ This was taken just as it was handed to him. I have also a negative of the men grouped around the Churinga—with the Churinga showing, one ditto ditto greasing the Churinga, two pictures of Udnirringita quab [*sic*] undattha. Tomorrow the proceedings are to terminate by taking the visitors to the Ertnatulunga¹²⁷ which has not been seen by the old Alatunja who leads the party. I am to accompany the party, and when I came in tonight reeking with red ochre and emitting an effluvia of rancid fat and charcoal and announced this to my long suffering wife she fairly snorted. I should

123. See Spencer and Gillen 1899: 162–6.

124. See Spencer and Gillen 1899: Fig. 23, 1904: Fig. 86.

125. The Alatunja is the head man (and ritual expert) of a local totemic group.

126. Probably Spencer and Gillen 1904: Fig. 85.

127. Sacred storehouse of a local totemic group where the sacred objects used in ceremonies are stored; they may not be seen by women or children. The objects consist mostly of churinga or bull-roarers.

get one or two interesting pictures at the gap¹²⁸ but as I have no developer they will have to wait arrival of next mail.

I hope to start south in about three weeks. You can address your letters as usual and they will reach me wherever I am. I have sent a considerable portion of my collection also our silver, pictures etc. The old den looks forlorn now that the walls have been partly denuded and the house too looks somewhat empty. I could not watch these things being packed without experiencing a pang, it seems like beginning life over again, and I have been so completely content and happy here that I doubt whether I shall ever feel quite the same elsewhere.¹²⁹

Note that the double pointing stick sent to you some time ago belongs to the wild duck totem. The Takula¹³⁰ (see photo) of which you have one or two specimens belongs to the Yarumpa people out west. I fancy—but I am not sure—that the various pointing sticks are inherited from the particular Oruncha¹³¹ associated with each totem. I read through the proofs carefully, no errors except that you have written Kartwia Quatcha—Kartwia means Country, the word is always placed after the name of the totem as Quatcha Kartwia, Erlia Kartwia, Okira Kartwia etc etc. I thought you would leave taapertapu¹³² out of Warramunga, it's a most singular thing that we cannot find another word. The Tennant blacks persist in their original statement.

Do whatever you think proper about photos. I regard them as our joint property and am willing to let you deal with them as you think best.¹³³ I shall probably add some interesting pictures during the next few months. Don't be the least bit afraid of Frazer¹³⁴ being disappointed with the work, he's probably lost in admiration and too much moved to write! But if not then write and tell him to come and try his hand. Seriously though, I hope he'll understand the rush for I am longing to see the work published. Glad to hear the frog was interesting,

128. Presumably Emily Gap.

129. Gillen sent his family and belongings south before the summer. His wife was pregnant and gave birth to Eily Kathleen Gillen on 28th February 1899.

130. A pointing stick.

131. Term applied to men and women who lived in the mythical past, and to spirit individuals at the present day, who are regarded as being of a mischievous nature.

132. Kin term for father's mother in the Warramunga tribe.

133. Anyone attempting to attribute different photographs to Gillen or Spencer must concur. They are a mixed collection, so precise attribution is sometimes difficult.

134. Sir J. G. Frazer (1854–1941), anthropologist and author of *The Golden Bough*. He proposed to the publisher, Macmillan, that they publish the *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, and helped proof-read it.

McKay¹³⁵ sent it to me from Barrow Creek. Send me a couple more tins per post and I will send one each to the Barrow and Tennants. Large frogs are plentiful at both places in the wet season. Send along spirits in bulk if you want that large collecting tin filled. I haven't had time to work on the questions contained in your letter. Irunta certainly means cold, and Jim Oroka¹³⁶ assured me today that belonging to the cold was the proper translation of Irunturinya. Surely I have mentioned somewhere in my notes that the Ungambikula¹³⁷ made country?—hills etc. [...]

I am glad and so is my wife that Mrs Spencer is getting about again. Please give her my kindest regards. My wife has picked up during the winter but she is not very strong and I shall be glad when I have landed her safely at Oodnadatta—it is very probable that I shall be called into town for a few days, I would much rather not go, partly because of the expense and partly because I should feel parting from the wife and bairns more if I accompanied them to the settled districts—the three days in the train after saying goodbye would be intolerable.

Now, old man, I must conclude this disjointed—I'm afraid incoherent—letter. When I sat down I thought of giving you one page and here I am with the fifth. Unreadable letter from French, still after Bower birds I suppose.

Slianthe¹³⁸

Yrs ever truly,

FJG

What an ass Barton¹³⁹ was to tackle Reid¹⁴⁰ in his own stronghold.¹⁴¹ Such bad generalship amounts—in my opinion—to criminal folly, as soon as I heard that he was going to tackle Reid I offered to wager five pounds that the podgy one would win. I haven't had time to look through the papers but I quite expect to

135. McKay was on the staff of the Barrow Creek Repeater Station on the Overland Telegraph line.

136. Aboriginal informant and police tracker.

137. Two beings who transformed inapertwa creatures into humans. The meaning of the term is 'self-existing' or 'made out of nothing'.

138. *Sláinte*, the Gaelic toast.

139. Sir E. Barton (1849–1920), first Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth (1901–3).

140. Sir G. H. Reid (1845–1918): New South Wales Premier; led opposition in first cabinet of Commonwealth of Australia in 1901.

141. In July 1898, Barton resigned his seat in the New South Wales Legislative Council to stand against Reid in the general election but was narrowly defeated. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in September as leader of the Opposition.

find that Reid jibed Barton into this false move. Of the two men Reid is unquestionably the abler tactician. Now all the weak-knee'd federalists will go over to Reid: there are always a large number of people of no opinion who follow the successful side. I'm disgusted with Barton—Reid could not have handled Charlie Kingston¹⁴² in this way. Good night.

FJG

Letter 58

This letter is written from Moonta, to where Gillen had transferred earlier that year. The Native Tribes of Central Australia was published the same year. This letter gives a clear indication of Gillen's lack of confidence about his abilities to write (in this case, his speech to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science) and his views on the treatment of Aboriginal people. It also shows his continuing commitment to research. Many of Gillen's letters contain references to Australian and Irish politics. Gillen was a fervent supporter of Home Rule for Ireland: his parents had emigrated from Ireland shortly before his birth in South Australia.

Slianthe

Moonta¹⁴³

15th November 1899

My dear Spencer,

Like you I have been head over ears at work, for some weeks one of my assistants has been away ill and I've had to graft daily from 8.30 a.m. until 7.30 p.m. Happily he has returned and I shall now have a little more leisure though none too much. As usual you appear to be doing yourself to death. I am rather

142. C. C. Kingston (1850–1908), South Australian Premier 1893–9; entered federal politics in 1901, becoming Minister of Trade and Customs.

143. Gillen was now the Postmaster at Moonta Post Office. Moonta is on the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia, a mining town at that time principally populated with immigrant Cornish Nonconformist miners. Gillen never found the town congenial and sought, unsuccessfully, to transfer to Adelaide or one of its suburbs. He stayed at Moonta until he was transferred to Port Pirie.

sorry that Mrs Spencer has gone home¹⁴⁴ just now, for in her absence you will have no one to curb your enthusiasm. Why on earth you can't take things steadily and work like a rational man I can't for the life of me understand. I don't know any man with such intemperate gluttony for work, and I should feel much happier about you if you would cultivate a little of the Govt Stroke¹⁴⁵ which you libellously attribute to the common or garden Govt official.

I quite expect to see you looking like a walking ghost when I go to Melbourne. Anyhow I hope the three or four days on the Spur¹⁴⁶ were devoted to lazing and smoking and not to some form of labor.

So you have made me President of the Eth Sect'n¹⁴⁷ after all. I was hoping that you would be able to get someone else to fill the position. You certainly could not have got a worse man and by appointing me you have added to your already overburdened [load?]. Now as to the address,¹⁴⁸ I don't think anything could be made out of the new bill¹⁴⁹ to which I am strongly opposed, as you will see by the Tiser's¹⁵⁰ comments on my evidence. The question of the future treatment of the blacks could be dealt with in half a dozen brief sentences. The main points are (1) Govt should provide liberal supplies at all depots and not, as in the past, seek to curtail expenditure in this direction. (2) All pastoral leases should contain a clause reserving to the blacks right of access to all parts of the lease, the blacks should be informed by the Police and by the Protectors that they possess this right, and the Police and Protectors should see that the spirit of the lease is not infringed by the lessee. This, as you know, is one of the greatest sources of hardship to the black and a never-ending cause of friction. Once the pastoral lessee is given to understand that he must not restrict the movements or hunting grounds of the blacks under heavy penalties he will soon come to regard himself and the black as joint occupier, both having equal rights, and we shall hear no more about the bogey of the blackfellows frightening the stock away. Of course Cowle and others will say that under such conditions it will not be possible

144. To England.

145. 'Government stroke': Australian slang for lazy methods of working, first adopted by convicts, now applied especially to civil servants.

146. Black Spur, Victoria, was a scenic mountain resort north of Melbourne. Spencer took Gillen there in 1900 to stay at 'The Hermitage', a fashionable guest-house owned by J. W. Lindt, the ethnographic photographer.

147. The Ethnological Section of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

148. Spencer had agreed to draft Gillen's address, which was delivered in 1900.

149. Gillen is referring to the new bill drawn up by Justice Dashwood of the Northern Territory concerning aboriginal welfare. It was defeated, partly because of the evidence given to the Select Committee by Gillen.

150. The *Advertiser*, an Adelaide newspaper.

to stock the interior but we know from experience in the Telegraph Stations and other Stations that after a very little time stock take no more notice of the black than of the white. (3) Powers of Protectors should be extended. At present they have no real power and are only Protectors in name. They should have right of access at all times to places where blacks are employed whether on crown leases or on private property, they should be empowered to take half castes and orphan children and send them to suitable institutions (4) and this is where the great public will arise and say, 'This fellow Gillen wants a fat billet'.

We should have, in connection with the Head Protector's office, an ethnological bureau in which all material collected by the Sub-Protectors or private individuals could be sifted, inquired into and recorded. In this connection Sub-Protectors should be instructed—all over Australia—to interest themselves in the habits, customs and language of the blacks, to record the results and furnish the head of the Dept with quarterly reports. The Sub-Protectors should be salaried officials, that is to say they should be paid a certain salary by the Aborigines department in addition to any salary they may receive from other departments. At present the tendency is to multiply offices without increasing the emoluments of the office holder. A table of questions should be drawn up and furnished to every Sub-Protector and distributed in all outlying districts. Such a table you could prepare splendidly. Boiled down, the whole policy of the department should have two objects—firstly (and from our point of view) to collect and record the habits, customs etc., and secondly to make the path to extinction—which we all agree is inevitable and rapidly approaching—as pleasant as possible.

There is nothing new in what I have written. We have discussed it all time and again and with you I think that 'Magic' would be a much better subject upon which to base the address which you will have to prepare.¹⁵¹ If you have time—which I fear you have not¹⁵²—a highly interesting paper can be made [of] this subject, and if you have not already used the latest material about returning of Churinga I think this would be an excellent opportunity to introduce it. You have also some particulars of forms of magic which were too late for the book—by all means let it be magic, anything is preferable to your first suggestions which would lay me open to the charge of being a billet hunter which honestly I am not. I am content to remain in the Telegraph Department all the days of my life provided I get an office near the city, but it is quite another thing being tied to a country town where all is routine and stagnation.

Parke writes that he has instructed his cronies on the Alberga to hunt up some of these earth-covered frogs and send them on to me. He also writes, 'I have lately seen what to me is one of the most curious spots I have ever seen in the

151. The title of Gillen's address at the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science was 'Magic among the Natives of Central Australia' (*Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science: Report of the Eighth Meeting, Melbourne 1900*, pp. 109–23).

152. Spencer was editing the handbook for the Melbourne AAAS meeting (Spencer 1900).

country.¹⁵³ It is situated about 7 miles from Henbury, and as you take more than ordinary interest in these matters I must describe it to you. It is nothing more nor less in appearance than an immense amphitheatre situated about 1/4 mile from a small range on comparatively level ground, from which level ground you ride up the mound encircling the amphitheatre, to all appearances the same as a mound around a dam, and this mound which completely surrounds the amphitheatre appears to have been placed there by some human agency, to have been taken or thrown there, as it is made ground and quite regular in appearance, bare and like refuse from a mine or quarry. Without the amphitheatre this mound would attract anyone's attention, but when you reach the top of the embankment and look down into the immense inside one cannot fail to be astonished as it is, I should say, 200 feet deep and the floor quite level. The floor would accommodate some thousands of cattle and appears to be white pipe clay with some mulga, acacia and back salt bark growing. The amphitheatre is to all intents round and regular, no breaks or entrance through surrounding embankment, sides a bit too steep perhaps to ride down but sloping. Blacks know and consider as remarkable the place (Oh Lord!), but (isn't this awful) they can give no information about it and have no traditions about it (the underline is mine—FJG). It has not been blown out and the ground has not caved in or whence the mound surrounding. There is another close by which I have not seen and it holds water after rain. To look at it I cannot but think it has been done by human agency, but when or why Goodness knows.'

You can imagine my emotions when I read of this. For six hours I felt like throwing up the PO and going back. Fancy such a place having no traditions, why it must simply reek of tradition—but what do you make of it? Is it, think you, some enormous and long-disused ceremonial pit? Please let me know what you think of it, meantime I have written strongly to Parke begging him to make further examination and to search for traditions amongst the old men. Henbury Station has been stocked and worked for 21 years and yet this extraordinary pit has never before been discovered. It seems to me a remarkable thing that the blacks have never spoken of it before. Oh that I could get up there for a month. It is evident that the Niggers are not eager to impart their traditions to Parke although he is very good to them.

Before I go to Melbourne I hope to have further information from Parke. I expect to leave here on the 3rd or 4th January and reach Melbourne about the 7th. My wife had decided to stay here and take a holiday later on with her people at Mt Gambier. The baby¹⁵⁴ is too young to travel about and she can't be persuaded to leave it.

I haven't time to touch on the Boer war upon which our views are in entire accord. At the same time, as an Irishman and a Home Ruler, I agree with the

153. A cluster of thirteen meteor craters from a single shower within a square kilometre. The craters are up to 183m in diameter, with ramparts up to 6m high (Thompson 1991: 29).

154. Eily Gillen.

action of the Irish Parliamentary Party who are simply carrying out the traditional policy of O'Connell and Parnell.¹⁵⁵ It will be quite time enough to help England with sympathy and support when she has done full justice to the nationalist aspirations of the Irish people—Davitt¹⁵⁶ perhaps has gone too far, but when one reflects that he was unjustly convicted and, while quite innocent, confined for 14 years in English prisons one can excuse him much. Like other Englishmen you seem to think we Irish should be grateful for what even you term merest justice. Grateful indeed, no concession has ever yet been wrung from the English Parliament—except as a result of agitations bordering upon civil war. The land laws are good now certainly, but who have we to thank for that? Parnell and his agitation—and, before an English Govt could be brought to see the justice of the tenantry's demand, thousands of Irishmen including Parnell were, without trial, summarily arrested and thrown into prison for terms varying from 1 month to 12. Then after grudgingly remedying what was an unquestionable evil, you expect me to be grateful—it's very funny—grateful for bare justice which is quite distinct from political favour. Fortunately the feeling of dislike for England is more one of sentiment than anything else, it does not prevent one Irishman joining the British Army, and no great Irish leader has yet gone so far as to advise the Irish peasantry not to join the army. We glory in the triumphs of the British arms just as much as the true-born Briton and although we freely criticise and sometimes abuse the English and their methods, we do not allow foreigners to do so. At the seat of war and at the Cape the Irish to a man are on the side of the British, and they have assailed most bitterly an able dignitary of their Church in the Cape Colony who is Dutch by descent and has Boer sympathies.

Enough of politics about which you don't care a tinker's malediction. The Wallaroo lecture was a great success. I had an overflowing audience, showed 100 lantern slides which were much appreciated. The chairman of the evening in proposing vote of thanks said it was the 'most interesting and instructive lecture ever delivered in Wallaroo'. I am to repeat it at Kadina shortly, am enclosing cutting from local paper. Am also enclosing Recommendations of Select Committee on Aborigines bill just this moment to hand. I have only had time to run through it. Glad you were able to put that shot into Tennyson about my collection.¹⁵⁷ Owen Smyth¹⁵⁸ told me he was annoyed about it. Kingston

155. C. S. Parnell (1846–91), Irish nationalist leader.

156. M. Davitt (1846–1906), Irish nationalist politician and founder of the Irish Land League. Davitt served seven years' penal servitude for sending firearms to Ireland, after which he moved to the United States. When he returned to Ireland he was rearrested. He entered parliament but resigned over the Boer War.

157. Lord Tennyson (1852–1928), Governor-General of South Australia and eldest son of the poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson. This is probably a reference to the sale of Gillen's ethnographic collection to the National Museum of Victoria for £300 in 1899 (Mulvaney and Calaby 1985: 249).

Govt had a narrow escape last week. I hear on unquestionable authority that the Conservative party offered the labor party two seats in Cabinet and everything they want except household suffrage for the Upper House, in return for their support, and for a time it was a toss up which way it went. Isn't it disgusting? Kind regards from us all and Love to little Chaps.¹⁵⁹ Are you in bachelor quarters or still in your own house?

FJG

Letter 158

This letter was written after the two men had returned from their year-long expedition across Australia and during the writing-up of The Northern Tribes of Central Australia, published in 1904.

Moonta
19th January 1903

My dear Spencer,

I spent the whole of yesterday going through old papers and rummaging in odd corners to see if I could find any Chitchingalla¹⁶⁰ notes. Not a line anywhere. The account I sent you was copied direct from my rough field-book and was unfortunately not copied into the foolscap books. I did not, idiot that I was, consider it of sufficient importance to make two copies. So far as I can remember the corroboree lasted a week (Roth¹⁶¹ says 5 days) and followed closely on the lines of Roth's descriptions except that there was no interval for tea and buns. His supposed intervals for refreshment are merely 'rests' for the performers and, of course, the women are not allowed to remain on the ground while the performers are merely lounging. Roth's description of the concluding scene is a little

158. C. E. Owen Smyth (1851–1925), head of the South Australia Works and Building Department.

159. Chaps or Chappie: Alline Spencer, Baldwin Spencer's younger daughter.

160. A ceremony.

161. W. E. Roth (1861–1933), anthropologist, acquaintance of Spencer's from Oxford. Surgeon in north-west Queensland from 1894 and Protector of Aborigines from 1898. For a discussion of the Molonga ceremony and its aftermath, described by Roth, which Gillen is referring to here, see Hercus 1980.

different, you have your own notes as to what took place and can compare with his account. The implements carried by the performers are in all cases the same as described by Roth, but his explanation of the meaning of the title of the corroboree is very different—in the Alice version, speaking from memory, the man who leads the final scene represents a devil woman who upon returning to her camp finds it occupied by men dancing a corroboree. She is very angry and tries to kill them with her magic spear but is herself killed and her camp destroyed. I think you have full particulars of the tradition in your Alice notes. As to me writing out a general account of a corroboree, I really don't remember enough about any one corroboree to be able to do so. My memory so far as corroborees are concerned is like a sieve. The Chitchingalla is the only one that I ever attempted to describe in detail, in fact it is the only one I ever sat out night after night from start to finish. I'm afraid we'll have to leave the description of a corroboree until another time. You might, however, point out—if you think it worth while—the difference between the Molonga of Roth and the Chitchingalla. The words of the corroboree are the same, I mean the chants. I went through all of them with the Niggers and the difference was very slight. I wonder why I never got complete records of other corroborees, I might have had half a dozen while our work was in progress, Atnimokitta—Ilyarnpa—Irkita—etc. etc. I hope you don't attach much importance to having a corroboree—you know enough about them to write a general account of their character and you have plenty of pictures to illustrate the style of decorations.

I wrote the preceding pages this morning. This afternoon's mail brought your letter with Notes on the Mara and Anula class system. I at once retired to my den and after chewing over the Notes for an hour or so it suddenly occurred to me that somewhere or other I had a note to the effect that in the Anula the marriage was not confined to one class. For half an hour I waded through my field notes without any result, then it occurred to me that the note might be in the tiny book I always carried in my pocket. Where on earth to look for this book I did not know, then as a last resource I went to my wife and found that she had taken it from me in Melbourne and stowed it away in her dressing cases. The very first page I opened contained this note, I transcribe it as it is written:

Roumburia
 Wiallia
 Urtallia
 Wauwukariay
 1 marries Wiallia
 2 " Roumburia
 3 " Roumburia
 4 " Wiallia

On reading it through I realized at once that it was the very evidence we wanted and the absence of which has caused us both and you in particular so much anxiety—on second thoughts I will enclose the note. Now that it is before me in black and white I have a distinct recollection of getting it. It was on the 3rd

November, you were feeling very unwell so I strolled down to the Blacks camp with George and spent some time, as the Mod Rec¹⁶² says, 'Cultivating friendly relations'. I remember mentioning or rather showing the Note to you, and the fact that both Wiallia and Urtallia married Roumburia etc appeared to us to be wrong and I thought that the Niggers had misinformed me. This impression we must have conveyed to the Blacks, who, knowing that we knew the systems of surrounding tribes, equally well known to them, thought it less trouble to give us the table as recorded in our journals. It is quite like the blackfellows to do this. Had you been well when I got this note or had I drawn your attention to it while we were struggling at Borrooloola¹⁶³ I think the thing would have been solved long ago. Now it is clear as day. There is not a shadow of doubt left in my mind, and I feel that I am largely responsible for the muddle. If funds permitted I'd run over and tender apologies—I feel greatly relieved and am more excited than if I had won a lovely little thousand at Tattersall. I wired you at once and hope you felt cheered. Slianthe.

Yrs

FJG

162. 'Modest Record', Gillen's name for his field notes from the second expedition. Published as *The Camp Jottings of F. J. Gillen* (Gillen 1968).

163. Spencer worked on the 1901–2 expedition notes while 'marooned' at Borrooloola (Spencer 1928: 579).

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