Notes on Certain Australian Marriage-Systems

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After some further conversation, I succeeded in persuading her to do as I wished, I promising to make it all right with the king. So she was confined of a boy in our house, only myself and two or three other women being present. I washed the infant and wrapped it up in a piece of print. I then put a *pareu* (= petticoat) on the mother, and said, "Now we will go to the king." At first she was frightened and exclaimed, "You do not know how much a woman just confined is loathed by her husband. I am afraid. The king's house is too *tapu* (= sacred) for me at present." At length I succeeded in overcoming her scruples, and we proceeded to the king's house. I went first, carrying the babe. When near the house I found the door shut; so I called out, "O King! O King! I am here. Open the door." But the king took no notice until I called out the third time, when he opened the door. I then said to him, "O King, I have brought you your babe. Here it is, and your wife too. Now pray do not refuse to admit them into your house. You profess to be a Christian. Now show that you are sincere, and let all your people see that you are in earnest by leaving off your old ways with regard to your wife and babe. Let them in; and do you feed your wife while she continues weak, and do not despise her, O King." Kauma said, "So I will," and admitted them.

Dr. Wyatt Gill adds: There can be no question as to the accuracy of this interesting sketch of native life in the Loyalty Islands a quarter of a century ago. The translation is very close to the original. I think the reason given at the end of the paper why women go to the bush to be confined, is the correct one, *i.e.*, that the husband "despises" and "loathes" her as being unclean. This reminds one of the Levitical law on the subject. Nothing like this was known in the Hervey Group. If a child were so born, it would be looked upon as illegitimate.

W. W. G.

Sydney,
July 4th, 1889.

NOTES on certain AUSTRALIAN MARRIAGE-SYSTEMS

By A. J. VOGAN.

The following is an extract from a letter of A. J. Vogan, Esq., dated Port Pirie, South Australia, October 27th, 1889, addressed to J. Jenner Weir, Esq., F.L.S., containing notes lately made by the writer in Central Australia:—

I have just returned from a long ride from Bourke, on the Darling (lat. 30° S.), to the Upper Mulligan (lat. 23° S.; long. 138° W.), and back southwards to Hergott, on the Transcontinental Railway line of South Australia (lat. 30° S.; long. 138° W.);

a distance, with branch journeys, of about 1,600 miles. Amongst the most interesting of my notes gathered on the trip are those referring to the marriage laws and methods of tracing descent of the aborigines of Central Australia. As each district has a different language, and uses different terms to denote the same divisions or classes into which all the tribes are divided, I will, in speaking of this subject, only employ the terms of the Dieri language employed in the Kopperamana district (lat. 28° S.; long. 138° W.), where I stayed lately, and had the best opportunity of putting my disjointed notes together under the guidance of a good native linguist in the person of a German Missionary named Flierl. To go *in medias res* I may say that everything tends to prove that the marriage customs, roughly speaking, of New Guinea and North Australia are the same as those of South Australia. You may, speaking generally, say that this one remarkable difference exists (I don't think anyone else has noticed or written about it), that in the fertile regions of the eastern coast of Queensland, amongst the food-producing regions of the moist coast range, descent is traced through the *father's* side of the family, and wives are not (at any rate in some tribes) held in common amongst brothers; whilst in the more *sterile* regions of Central and Northern Australia (or rather the "Gulf of Carpentaria country") the descent of an individual is always traced through the *mother's* side, and wives are held to a great extent in common amongst brothers, and even near relatives. Now, let us glance at the Kopperamana tribes, mentioned before. Here we find two chief classes, or divisions (called Mordu Kapara in the Dieri language). The principal of these two divisions is called *kalaru*, the other being *Materi*. Each class is divided as follows:—

KALARU.	MATERI (MAN).
Kaualka (crow).	Wonku (a snake).
Wama (a snake).	Marikila (a snake).
Mindri (running, a kind of plant).	Kalku (rushes).
Wira (a bush).	Kapita (wallaby).
Kukunka (eel-hawk).	Wilapi (a plant).

Now, if a boy after being "made a man" wishes to take a wife, he cannot choose any girl, for, although there may be no blood relationship between him and the one whom he would choose if he had the deciding of his own affairs she may belong to his own, or mother's division, and so, according to the native law, be his sister. Say such a youth is a Kaualka (*vide* list) man. His mother was a Kaualka woman; and both are of the great division Kalaru. Our young friend must choose his spouse from the other division, Materi. He chooses a Wonku girl, say, and has a son. This son is a Wonku-Materi, and can marry back into any sub-class on his father's side; but not to any individual who has any blood relationship with him.

I hope in this brief sketch you will see the *modus operandi* of the class marriages. In Central Australia the tribes are divided into

four principal classes; Pultarra, Coomarra, Perula, and Aponoonga. The son of a Perula woman can marry into any division but that of his mother's. In one part of Central Australia, towards the Alice Springs, another curious alteration is made, the son of a "Perula" can only marry an "Apoonunga" woman; and the offspring of a "Coomarras" only become the husband of a "Pultarras." The family groups above referred to are perpetuated hereditarily—not in a direct line, but by intermissions. Thus the offspring of a "Pultarra" woman are not "Pultarra," nor "Coomarras," but Perula.

Returning to the Kopperamana tribes (*only* as regards names of classes), we find all male cousins are called brothers, equally with the children of one father (Ngatata, a Maori, or New Zealand, word by-the-bye); and all female cousins, or sisters, indiscriminately under one title—Ngatata. Father, or father's brother, uncle, are called by the same term: Aperi, mother or mother's sister, aunt, is called Andri. To particularise the real parent, the term "andri-waka," or "Aperi-waka, "little mother," or "little father," is sometimes employed.

A man dying and leaving a widow, the native law demands that his brother, however *much* married before, must take her to wife. She has during her real husband's life already called all his brothers and himself by one term, husband, so she easily falls into the new relationship. In fact, brothers seem to hold their wives in common. Men, however, call their individual wives *yungaras*, and those to whom they have a secondary claim by right of being brothers-in-law *kartetis*. No marriage ceremony is performed in South Australian tribes; but the wife is bought of the brothers, the payment often taking place over a course of years, time-payment in wives in fact.

NOTES on a recent DISCOVERY in FINISTÈRE.

By Admiral TREMLETT.

Some masons who were employed in splitting erratic blocks of granite for building material, on a common near to the village of Saint Pabu in the Finistère, found near to them a Roman flanged tile. On lifting it they discovered it to be the covering to a cavity in which there had been a wooden box which had been entirely destroyed by decay; it contained from ten to eleven thousand small copper coins, the greater part of which were plated with silver, and which had been coined at Trèves.

Most of the coins were those of Valerius II, of Diocletian, Constantius Chlorus, Maximilian, Lucinus, Constantine the Great, and