

descent of the sections and totems is counted through the mothers in all cases.

Dr. Howitt reports that the Chepara and Turrubul tribes on the coast from Point Danger to Brisbane and Pine rivers "had no social organization in classes or totems, the regulation of marriage being by locality; and descent of name in the male line."<sup>8</sup> Speaking of the Kaiabara tribe at the Blackall or Bunya Bunya Ranges, he also asserts that "descent is in the male line."<sup>9</sup>

In 1898 I reported that the Turrubul tribe had the four intermarrying divisions, Barrang, Banjoor, Bunda and Derwain, with descent always reckoned on the female side, the children taking the phratry and totem name of their mother. At the same time I also showed that descent in the Kaiabara tribe is through the women and not through the men.<sup>10</sup>

In 1883 Dr. Howitt published a table of the four intermarrying divisions of the Mycoolon tribe on the Cloncurry River, Queensland, and stated that descent was through the father, giving as a reason that "under the influence of agnatic descent the girl is of the same class name as her mother's mother."<sup>11</sup>

In 1898 I contradicted this statement and showed that descent in the Mycoolon tribe is counted through the mother only.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Howitt in his late work, "Native Tribes of Southeast Australia," does not refer to my contradiction, from which it may be inferred that he maintains his statement of 1883. Whether he does so or not, it becomes necessary for me to repeat that I am quite certain that descent in the tribe mentioned is indisputably maternal. It should be mentioned that Mr. E. Palmer had also previously arrived at the same conclusion as myself.<sup>13</sup>

\* "Native Tribes of Southeast Australia," pp. 136-7.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>9</sup> *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.*, XXXVII., pp. 328-31, with map; *Journ. Roy. Soc. N. S. Wales*, XXXII., pp. 81-3.

<sup>10</sup> *Journ. Anthropol. Inst., London*, XIII., p. 346.

<sup>11</sup> *Journ. Roy. Soc. N. S. Wales*, XXXII., pp. 82-3.

<sup>12</sup> *Journ. Anthropol. Inst., London*, XIII., p. 302.

I have thought it right to draw attention to the differences between Dr. Howitt's statements and mine in order that the anthropologists of America and Europe may have both our views before them to assist them in arriving at a conclusion regarding the line of descent in the cases under notice, because it is a matter of the highest importance.

R. H. MATHEWS

#### UNIFORMITY IN ENGLISH ABBREVIATIONS

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: Is not the time ripe for uniformity in English abbreviations?

Perhaps the best way of bringing about such uniformity is through the issue, by some authoritative body, of a code in which, so far as possible, the roots of the words would be retained, a code somewhat similar to that used by the employees of the Associated Press. From such a code writers could probably be induced to take all their abbreviations which are to appear in print.

Such a code, if supported by strong authority, would probably be used by many writers for the press; and if learned through a course of years would not likely be a great strain on the memory, even though somewhat elaborate.

The present time seems to be propitious because workers in many special fields are introducing abbreviations of their own devising, many of them calling for the consultation of a table. From the point of view of the general diffusion of technical knowledge, it will prove unfortunate if the trials of the lay reader are increased by abbreviation of technical terms and the most direct road to preventing this is to decrease the labor of the scientist by abbreviating common terms.

The undersigned would be glad to hear from any parties who are interested in such a plan.

JOHN N. JAMES

INDIANA STATE NORMAL SCHOOL,  
INDIANA, PA.

#### INDISCRIMINATE KILLING OF MUSK OXEN

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: A number of facts are coming to light at the present time which must, in the minds of all thoughtful