

Please address to Trinity College
Cambridge

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FRAZER

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ROVMORE HOUSE.

GARELOCKHEAD N.S.W.

My dear Sir, In going through the second proofs of your book I have been more than ever struck by your account of the Intichiuma ceremonies. Such ceremonies for the multiplication of the totem plant or animal have not been (so far as I know) reported from any other part of the world, and taken in conjunction with other facts that you mention seem to set totemism in an entirely new light, at least so far as the Central Australian tribes are concerned. It almost looks as if among these tribes totemism were a system expressly devised for the purpose of procuring a plentiful supply of everything that the savage regards as desirable—food, water, sunshine, wood &c. The means of attaining this desirable end appeared (if I may presume hypothetically the line of thought suggested by the facts) to have been to take all the desirable things in nature and distribute them among the people, each group of people to whom a particular class of objects was assigned being especially charged with securing the multiplication of that particular object, or rather species. One group of people had to see that kangaroos abounded, another that grubs were plentiful &c. and the method in each case adopted to secure the multiplication of the species was the identification of the human group with the species of animals or plants &c. assigned to them. The people who had to multiply kangaroos must themselves be Kangaroos &c. because by being so they would know all the secrets of the kangaroos, how

They multiply show they may be caught &c.
For of course (the ultimate object of the whole
system (on this hypothesis) is to catch and eat the
Kangaroos, emus, grubs &c.; it is not a purely
diminished desire to secure the
flowering of plant and animal life on a
large scale.

Hence the duty
of a Kangaroo man is not merely to see that
there are plenty of kangaroos; he has also to
catch and kill, & at least to help others to
catch and kill them. In the Brundha tribe
originally; to judge by the traditions, a man was
quite free to kill and eat the animal with the
multiplication of which he was specially charged.
(his totem); and if the theory of totemism
which I am developing hypothetically should turn
out to be of general application, we may suppose
that among many tribes there never was any
objection to a man catching, killing, and eating
his totem. But among many tribes a feeling
against killing and eating the totem (I mean
of course only a man's own totem) may
have been felt from the outset or may rather
gradually spring up, and the train of thought
to which led to the taboo on killing and eating
a man's own totem may have been something
like this: "I am, e.g., a Kangaroo man, and I
want to make as many Kangaroos come and
be eaten as I can. Now if I ~~eat~~ kill
and ~~eat~~ eat them myself, the Kangaroos
will regard me with fear and distrust as a
dangerous creature, not as a genuine Kangaroo
at all. I must therefore be very kind and
gentle to my brothers and sisters, the Kangaroos,
I must never injure them myself, and then I
shall be able to induce them to come quickly
and confidently to be injured (in fact to be
killed and eaten) by my fellow tribesmen. It is a

puty certainly that I am debarred from eating
roast kangaroo while my fellows are feasting on
it; but then they make it up to me in other
ways. The grub men bring me grubs to eat
while they may not touch themselves; the emu
men bring me emus &c. &c. And if occasionally
I take a bite or two at a joint of kangaroo
when no kangaroo is looking no great harm will
be done especially if I take care not to eat
the best of the flesh, but only the inferior
parts. Indeed in order to be (as I am) a
real kangaroo it is necessary that I should
occasionally eat kangaroo; for unless I have
real kangaroo flesh and blood in me, how
could I be a kangaroo? I should be only a
sham kangaroo, and that would never do. The
other kangaroos would know at once that I
was an impostor and not one of them would
come near me when I wanted to catch
them.

What do you think of this as an hypo-
thesis to explain totemism as it is among your
tribes? The general line of conduct assumed
- the conciliation of animals with a view to
more easily catching and killing them - is closely
analogous to that pursued by hunting tribes
towards animals which they live by but
which are not their totems (Golden Bough,
II. p. 110ff.). The difference between the two
systems is this, that whereas among the Brundha
the prohibition of the animals is limited to
one group, the totem group (who in general
may not kill & eat the animal) among the
hunting tribes referred to in my book the
prohibition is practiced by everyone, and no
one is debarred from killing & eating the
animal, provided he goes through the necessary

form of conciliating the dead animal and his kindred. The ceremonial eating of the totem by the men of the totem, as described by you in connection with the ~~totem~~ Intichiuma ceremonies, seems to me a true totem sacrament (the first well authenticated example of such a sacrament that has come to light, I believe), the object of which is to identify the man with his totem by imparting to him the life & qualities of the totem animal.

In order to test this hypothetical explanation of totemism among your tribes enquiries must be made in several directions. Particularly it must be ascertained whether all the totems without exception are things regarded by the natives as desirable, of course if every totem group practises ceremonies for the multiplication of the totem species this would amount to an answer in the affirmative; for the natives would not seek to multiply things which they did not think desirable. Hence any instances of undoubtedly undesirable totems or of totems in connection with which Intichiuma ceremonies were never practised would militate against my theory. Do you know of any such instances? (When I say 'you', you will understand that throughout I am addressing yourself and your colleague Mr. Gillen jointly.) Then when a Kangaroo man, e.g., eats of a Kangaroo on other occasions than at the sacrament does he take any precautions against being caught by a Kangaroo in the act? does he eat secretly or with his head covered? does he dispose of the bones and other remnants in any special way so as to conceal the deed from the other animals or to secure the resurrection of the defunct beast? If there is anything in this theory, it is clearly of the greatest importance to secure as many examples as possible of Kangaroo men ~~but~~

helping men of other totems to catch ^{FRAGERIS 2} and
kill Kangaroos &c. You quote at least one case
of this but to establish the theory firmly many
more would be needed, and if possible from
other parts of the world where totemism is
practised. I would suggest
that enquiries in this direction should be made
all over Australia.

A difficulty which occurs to me in the
way of accepting this theory as a general explan-
ation of totemism (though the difficulty does
not apply to the Arunta tribe) is this: Why
are men and women of the same totem so
commonly forbidden to marry or even have
sexual intercourse ^{with each other}? On the hypothesis that
totemism exists for the multiplication of the
totem plants and animals, it would seem to
be most natural that a Kangaroo man should
mate with a Kangaroo woman, and that by
their union the number of real Kangaroos should
be supposed to be increased. I can only state this difficulty
by sympathetic magic, without solving it. Anyhow if my new
theory of totemism (it may have occurred to
you independently) is correct, it seems to
follow that the original and fundamental
side of totemism is the religious, not the
social; in other words it is the 'superstitious'
relation of the man to his totem animal
or plant that is the original element of
totemism; the social element (the prohibition
to marry a woman of the same totem) has
been tacked on to it subsequently, and not in
all cases. The absence of the 'exogamous rule'
among the Aruntas is a further argument in
favour of the same view.

If you think there is anything in the
I have sketched, I should be glad if you
would submit it for criticism to my friends
Fison and Howitt, as well as of course to
your colleague Mr. Gillen. Any
remarks you or they might make on it
would be carefully and respectfully
considered by me. If you were to give it
a general or provisional approval I might
state it briefly and tentatively in the new
edition of the Golden Bough which I have in
hand. How far the new theory I have in
with the one propounded by me in the first
edition of my book (viz. that a man keeps his
life or part of it in the totem animal) is a
matter for consideration. The two are not
obviously contradictory. The two are not
of a man with his totem, the identification
of each other. The identification
a part of the new theory, which is ~~the~~
part of the old one, was the main
point.

At a meeting of the Anthropological
Institute in May, 1891, I proposed
of totemism based partly on some facts
mentioned by Codrington in his Melanesians
and partly on your evidence as to the way
in which a man's totem is determined among
of his paper, but I may say that his
explanation is briefly this - the souls of
ancestors animate the totem animals or
plants and therefore these animals or plants are
sacred to their descendants. There is certainly
something to be said for this theory (which
occurred to me independently as a consequence of
reading your evidence). It is not necessarily
inconsistent either with my old or my new
theory; it might quite well be embodied new

with both. It might be that the group changed
with the multiplication of a particular species of
animal or plant kept their spirits (or one
set of their spirits) in the ~~the~~ animals or
plants during their lifetime and transmigrated
into them at death with the whole of their
spiritual baggage, part of which had been
retained in their human bodies during their
lives.

Taylor, to whom second proofs of your
book have been sent by me, has proposed
to Macmillan and me that the part of the
book dealing with the Intichiuma ceremonies from
p. 180 onwards should be abridged by the
omission of what he called " tedious and dis-
agreeable details." This proposal I absolutely
refused to entertain, and that on two
grounds. First, I have no authority from
you to make any such change my duty
being limited strictly to seeing the book
through the press; and I pointed out to
him that if I were to exercise such an
authority without your leave I should be
you would have just ground of complaint
against me. Second, I said that even
if you had given me the fullest authority
to exercise and compress, I would not
have exercised it in the present case, as
I regard the chapter to which Taylor takes
exception as of the utmost importance, indeed
as the most valuable in the book. I added
that what we want is not less but far
more details of the same sort, and that I
was about to write it, you asking you to
proceed enquire on these lines. I hope

that you and Mr. Gillen will approve of my
action in the matter. If Tylor thought compression
desirable, why did he not say so in the first
proof which he sent out to you (I suppose) with
his corrections and suggestions? You and Mr.
Gillen would then have been able to do your
own compression, if you had thought it
desirable, which I fervently trust you would
not. Nothing in the book, in my opinion,
can be spared. You need not fear any
compression or squeezing or mutilation of your
book so long as I am charged with
seeing it through the press. If anything of
that sort is to be done, it will be done
over my dead body.

Yours very truly

J. G. Frazer