

FRAZER

(21)

13 Guest Road  
Cambridge

28 November 1898

My dear Sir

Your very interesting letter of October 20th. reached me last evening. Though I hope to discuss the matter of it with you personally very soon I will make one or two remarks on it now. But first of all I write to ask whether it would suit your plans to stay with us in Cambridge from Saturday Dec. 10th to Monday Dec. 12th? It would give my wife and myself if much pleasure if you would do so. My friend Dr. Henry Jackson, whom I am anxious that you should meet leaves Cambridge for the vacation on the 12th., but he is disengaged on the 10th. and 11th. and would greatly like to meet you. I should also like you to meet my friend Prof. Ridgeway, a man of remarkable ability who is much interested in these matters. I know how much occupied your time will be, but I trust that you will be able to spare two days to

Cambridge. If the 10th suits you, pray come at any hour that may be most convenient to you. I will put myself at your disposal during your stay. I hope that you will at least arrive in time for dinner ~~at~~ hall at 7.45, but if you could come a few hours earlier so much the better.

Since I have read your letter it seems to me very desirable that you should publish your views on the origin of totemism, in a more or less provisional form, as soon as you conveniently can, if possible during your stay in England. I would suggest ~~that~~ the publication <sup>Native or</sup> should take the form of ~~the~~ a letter to <sup>the</sup> Athenaeum or a paper read before the Anthropological Society. For the latter a special meeting of the Institute <sup>^</sup> would have to be called and the only practical day for it would seem to be the 13th. December. I am going to write Mr. Str. Galton to see if he could arrange for such a meeting. Your time will be so short that I think it would save you time and trouble if the arrangements were made at once. They can easily be countermanded if on consideration you would prefer not to state your ~~views~~ <sup>views</sup>

to the anthropological either because they are not yet definite enough or for any other reason.

The reason why I venture to urge you to publish at once is this. The facts which you have collected seem to offer a plausible, perhaps probable, explanation of the origin and meaning of totemism - an origin and meaning such as no one had hitherto dreamed of.

The inference from your facts seems so easy and obvious (though both Tylor and Lang - to whom at his desire

Macmillan sent proofs - have failed to see it) that I can hardly but think that on the publication of your book,

the solution of the mystery which has puzzled anthropologists so long will occur to thoughtful persons, who will hasten to publish their discovery if you have not already done so. You will have observed from my letter of Sept. 17th. that

I was working towards a conclusion in some respects agreeing with what I take

to be your own, and since writing that letter and reading a second time more

carefully your account of the Brunba traditions I have reached independently and

independently and

have stated as an hypothesis to various friends (including Jackson and Ridgway) a theory of the origin of <sup>the</sup> exogamy of the totem clans which is precisely identical with the one described in your letter. Now what has occurred to me may well occur to many others, and it would be a great pity (it seems to me) if the honour of first publicly stating what is probably the true explanation of the origin of totemism should fall to any one but its true discoverer, I mean yourself. For these reasons I hope you will consent to publish at least an abstract of your conclusions as to the origin and meaning of totemism without delay.

From what I have said you will see that I agree with you (as against Fison and Howitt) in inclining to think that the religious side of totemism is the fundamental and original one, and that a fully developed system of totem clans or groups probably existed before there was any idea of exogamy. We have only to assume that a community consisting of a number of totem groups decided to bisect itself into two exogamous divisions and to put one half the totem groups in one division and the other half in the other division - and at once we have the exogamy of the totem

would not be difficult to find cases contradictory of your theory. What is the rule of descent in the Dieri? Gason misled me about it, and I have not Howitt's correction (in the 'Journ. Anthr. Inst.') to hand at present. Among the Dieri children regularly eat of their dead mother, and the mother eats of her dead children. If the Dieri have female descent and don't kill their totems, that would seem to be a nail in the coffin of your theory.

As to my own explanation, I meant to suggest that a man refrains from killing and eating his totem animal in order that the animal may not fear and avoid him. I did not suppose that the Australian fears his totem, as the elephant hunter and the bear hunter fear and propitiate the animals they hunt and kill. Nor did I mean to say that wherever you have propitiation of animals killed for food or for other reasons you have totemism. I do not suppose for a moment that the elephant-hunter or the bear-hunter is, so far forth, a totemist (if I may use that abominable word, which by the way I think you rightly avoid). All I meant was that in the propitiation of animals by the hunters and fishermen who catch



always continued to exist) without exogamy; and conversely where we find exogamy by itself we are not justified in assuming that there ever was totemism. In short totemism and exogamy are two entirely distinct things that may and have existed quite independent of each other.

So far I think we are agreed. It is when we come to the reason for not killing the totem animal that I am inclined to dissent from you. You suggest that the taboo was originally on eating men of the same totem and was afterwards by analogy extended to eating the totem animal. To this I object that many Australian tribes continue to eat their relations as a mark of affection after they have given up eating their enemies. See my Totemism, p. 79 sq. For the examples there given I ~~can~~ could now add others. Indeed I am not sure ~~it~~ but that it might be plausibly maintained that the eating of dead relations is the last (not as you assume the first) side of cannibalism to be given up. Indeed your theory would obviously be upset if any of the many Australian tribes who eat their dead relations do at the same time refrain from eating their Totems. I have not yet investigated the cases, but I fancy it

a more primitive method of securing  
 a food supply than propitiation. Thus  
 I am greatly **TRINITY COLLEGE,** pleased that  
<sup>me</sup>~~The~~ result of your researches is to confirm  
**CAMBRIDGE.** my view on this subject. In fact I  
 am coming more and more to the  
 conclusion that if we define religion as  
 the propitiation of <sup>natural and</sup> supernatural powers,  
 and magic as the coercion of them,  
 magic has everywhere preceded religion.  
 It is only when men find by  
 experience that they cannot compel the  
 higher powers to comply with their  
 wishes, that they condescend to  
entreat them. In time, after long  
 ages, they begin to realize that  
entreaty is also vain, and that they  
 try compulsion again, but this  
 time the compulsion is applied within  
 narrower limits and in a different  
 way from the old magical method.  
 In short religion is replaced by  
 science. The order of evolution, then,

# of human thought and practice is  
magic - religion - science. We in this  
generation live in a transition  
epoch between religion and science,  
an epoch which will last of course,  
for many generations to come. It is  
for those who care for progress to  
aid the final triumph of science  
as much as they can in their day.

But this has carried me far  
away from totemism. I hope we shall  
talk these matters over when you  
come. I shall be particularly interested  
to know what you think of my  
theory of a magical age ~~preceding~~  
preceding in order of time a religious  
age at least in Australia.

My wife and I look forward  
with pleasure to the visit which ~~we~~ we  
hope you will pay us. If the time I  
have mentioned (Dec. 10-12) does not  
suit you, please name any other. All  
days (except Dec. 6th) are equally convenient  
to us.  
Yours very truly  
J. G. Frazer