



Paquebot, le Ville de la Citat.  
w. Suzy. FRAZER  
Jan 5. 98 (28)

My dear Sir,

I must apologize for having so long delayed to answer your letter with regard to the Scotch stones which seem to bear a certain resemblance to Clunmija.

Whether they have really any definite connection with those so far as their meaning is concerned it is of course impossible to say.

As yet while we know of wooden 'whirlers' or 'bull roarers' from all over Australia the stone ones seem to be confined to the central area but probably further work will show that stone ones are found wherever

wooden ones shaped like those of the Arunta tribe exist.



The second form (described by Howitt), as used in the Kurnai tribe, is different both in shape and significance.

In this case the 'whistler' or 'Tundum' is definitely associated with the spirit of Paramulum - a smaller one also with that of the wife of the latter and each individual of the tribe does not possess his own whistler as he (and she) does in the Arunta.

In the latter tribe while the women are told that the noise of the Churnija is the voice of Twanyirika the latter is not associated with any special Churnija and the spirit is

not supposed to impart any instruction at the time of initiation.

I am inclined to think that the association of particular Churnija with particular individuals, such as we now know exists amongst the Central Tribes, will be found to be widely spread over Australia - in fact possibly everywhere except along the Coastal fringe on the East + South East. This of course is mere conjecture but the resemblance in form of the Churnija of all parts of the Continent except along the Coastal fringe is evidence tending in that direction; but as you can understand it is very difficult to gain information on such 'sacred' matters about which the natives will only speak to men like my colleague W. J. Gillen in whom they have

implicit trust.

I have asked Mr Macmillan to send you a copy of our book and shall be glad to reply to any queries - that is if I can.

Also I promised Mr Frazer to write to you about a point connected with the totems but had so much to do during my short visit to England that I could not do so.

To put it briefly the main point brought out with regard to the totems is that each totemic group seems to be charged, as its main function, with the duty of increasing the numbers of the object ~~the~~ name of which it bears.

The Intichiuma ceremonies form the most important ~~function~~ feature of the Totemic system in the Central tribes and what Mr Frazer calls the



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religious side is strongly developed the social being almost non-existent.

The social aspect, so far as it regulates marriage etc, as found in other tribes, is something which has been tacked on at a later period to a previously existing religious aspect.

The traditions of the Arunta tribe strongly point in this direction and they are all the more interesting and important because they relate to times when the organisation of the tribe was very different from that of the present day so that they are not

simply say this which have arisen to explain the organization of the present day. For example according to these traditions in past times a man appears to have been obliged to belong to a particular totem before he could eat the Memie animal - unless he was a Kangaroo he might not eat Kangaroo etc. At the present day he will only eat Kangaroo at a special sacramental ceremony but he will give permission to other men to eat it and will assist them in catching it.

I am inclined to think that too much stress has been laid on the oft quoted statement of Grey + that Dupon search in the tribes with which he dealt would show something more in common with the Central

tribes. Have you ever noticed the suggestive statement which Grey himself makes (in his work on the dialects) that one hypothesis suggested by the members of one or two totems to account for their bearing the Memie name was that they used to feed upon the totem. W H E R E ? ?

If we had never chanced to come across the Intichiuma ceremony we should have regarded the Central tribes as agreeing with and corroborating Grey's well known statement about the totem not being eaten, or only sparingly, and as a matter of fact this is true but quite misleading and requires to be amplified in view of our knowledge of the meaning of the Intichiuma ceremonies. It is significant also that we have found the latter existing amongst tribes in

which the social organization (as regulated by totems & classes) is exactly similar to that of Greij's tribes so that the religious aspect of the Totemic system as seen in the Arunta is not a special development peculiar to this & other tribes in the Centre.

After reading through our chapters on the Totems & Intichiuma ceremonies I think that you will come to the conclusion that we shall have to regard the non-eating of the totem as probably a & relatively late development - how it has been brought about is the crux - and that further the religious aspect of the totem is the earlier & the social the later: over a very large area in Australia there is practically no social aspect at all.

I hope I have made myself clear if not please put ambiguity & disjointedness to the account of the Mediterranean which has not been kind to us. Yours very sincerely  
W. Baldwin Spencer.