



Baquebot, le Ville de la Cité at
w Colombo. ^{PRAZER}

Jan 15/99. 29

My dear Frazer,

I send under separate cover a few remarks on Totemism. Will you kindly glance at them and if you think it worth while please send them on to the Anthropological. You will see that at the end I have said a little about soul transference. It seems to me that there is not really any idea of this amongst our tribes nor do I think there is amongst Australian tribes generally.

The statement of Frey about the Kobong has been so often quoted that I think people have come to think that there is a great deal more known

about Australian totems than there really is. Howitt's sex totem may be put on one side: it is only found in a tribe which is probably abnormal in its organization.

Is there any other statement besides Frey's dealing with the meaning of the totem? It is quite likely that as soon as any worker such as Fison (who was quite incapable of forming any reliable conclusion) found totems existing he at once jumped to the conclusion that they had the significance attributed to them by Frey.

Frey really knows very little indeed about the customs of the natives and when he says that to kill one's totem is forbidden because in doing so one might be killing one's dearest

friend it may be only his way of expressing the idea that a man regards his totem as just the same thing as himself. This of course is exactly what our natives say but they do not at all mean that the totem contains the soul of a man.

It is quite true that the soul of an ancestor is associated with a Chewong + that in the Selen tribes men are, at least in one case, said to hang their Chewong on the Nartanya when they went out hunting but it does not seem to me that this at all implies that they had any idea of placing the soul in the totemic animal. In fact when they went out hunting it was usually in search of their totemic animal + with the express idea of catching + eating it which does not look much as if they had any

idea of transferring the soul to the beast.

I think that in a previous note I made some remarks about your idea with regard to the pacification of the totemic animal or plant - as connected with the fact that it is no longer eaten freely.

I do not see how this can possibly apply in the case of plants where there can be no idea, as there might be in that of animals, that they would become frightened + not come near enough.

Then again the killing goes on all the same and it is difficult to see why an animal should object to being killed by a man of its totem and not by anyone else.

What seems to me more likely is that the idea is that too freely eating + killing produces an estrangement between the man + his totem so that he loses his influence over it + cannot efficiently perform Intichiumna.

After all though of importance yet



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the point is a secondary one as the fundamental fact, both in the Alcheringa & now, is that the man must eat his totem.

I am not at all keen about publishing the notes now sent and if you think them in any way unsatisfactory please destroy them & I shall be perfectly satisfied. in fact with only a knowledge of Australian matters I do not know how far it is advisable to put them into print as theorizing is a dangerous matter when ones knowledge is so limited & I am quite content to leave it to one like yourself with a wide knowledge.

By now I hope Macmillan will have sent you a copy of the book which

ought by now to be printed off.

He kindly sent me a few incomplete copies but I did not send you one of these because they were incomplete in one or two points.

I don't find it very easy to even think rationally on board a boat and will write further from Melbourne - meanwhile I am having a most enjoyable dose of sunbath + sleep in the midst of lovely seas + spin.

With kindest regards to
Mr. Trayer
Yours very sincerely

W. Aldwin Spence.