

FRAZER

(30)

TRINITY COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

6 February 1899

My dear Spencer

Your letter from Colombo, with the enclosure, reached me on the 4th. I will of course send on your paper to the Anthropological Institute. It ought certainly to appear in the Journal.

After I got your letter from Marseilles, in which you approved of my proposal to write an article for one of the journals, I offered to the editor of the Fortnightly to write an article on the origin of totemism, explaining to him the circumstances. He accepted the proposal, so I wrote the article and sent it in a week ago. I have not seen it in proof yet. It is practically an expansion

of what I said at the anthropological, but I have so far developed the theory as to include an explanation of sub-totems or pseudo-totems (as Horowitz calls them) and a suggested explanation of Roth's taboos on animal food. You will readily see of course that the sub-totems fit in beautifully with our theory. If the object of the system was to control the whole of nature for the good of man, and the totem clans were few in number, it is obvious that each clan would have to undertake the charge of many departments of nature in addition to its own proper totem; thus additional departments of nature under the special charge of each totem clan are the sub-totems or multiplex totems, as they might also be called. The may conjecture that Intichiuma ceremonies are practiced also in regard to sub-totems. Evidence of this should be looked for also of their practice by Roth's tribes. The may conjecture that each expedition to perform Intichiuma for all the animals it was forbidden to eat transference (a really subordinate matter,

as you say) I am inclined to stand by my guns, in spite of your fire. In regard to the legend of the Wild Cat men who hung their churings on the mortaja when they went out hunting you say: "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 and with the express idea of catching and eating it, which does not look much as if they had any idea of transferring the soul to the beast." Certainly it does not look much to us as if they could have any such idea, but the matter may have presented itself otherwise to the savage. May he not have thought that by transferring a part of his life, including his will or a part of it, to the animal he could make it come and be killed instead of running away? I take it, this was a sort of primitive mesmerism. And when the savage killed and ate the animal which he had thus mesmerized,

he would of course recover, in its flesh
and blood, the portion of his own vitality
which he had put into the creature, so
that he would suffer no harm by
his temporary life-transference; on the
contrary, he would have procured
himself a good dinner. The risk would
only arise when the beast was killed and
eaten by somebody else. When that other
was a friend (a member of the same
group or tribe, though not of the same totem)
he would have to perform some ceremony
for the purpose of restoring the human
life or soul in the beast to its proper
owner. This may have been in part
the intention of the totem sacrament.
and I conjecture that in killing an
animal which is known to be a
friend's totem the hunter performs a
ceremony of some sort for the purpose I
have indicated. Look at the remarkable
ceremonies with ball rowers &c. performed
over dead turtles by the Torres
Straits Islanders, among some of whom
the turtle is a totem (Haddon, in *Ann.
~~Anthrop. Inst.~~ Internationales Archiv für
Ethnographie, VI. p. 150sq.*). Again, a

Brazilian tribe performs ceremonies at the killing of all those animals into which the souls of their medicine men trans-migrate at death; the ceremonies have for their object to make sure that there is no more life in the animal; none of the animals of this sort may be eaten till the ceremonies have been performed over them. Ask Gillen to make careful enquiries as to what is done by men in killing an animal which is a totem of their friends, though not of their own.

On these lines I have in my paper for the Fortnightly defended the idea of soul transference as forming the complement of the totem sacrament. The great principle by which the magical influence over the totem is obtained, whether for the purpose of multiplying or of catching and killing or gathering it, is the identification of the man with his totem, and this is effected by a double process, 1) by transferring the life of the animal or plant to the man in the totem

sacrament, and 2) by transferring a part of the man's life to the totem by means of the charms & the magical implements, the charms & the workings.

As to conciliation of the totem by not eating it, you say that this could not apply to plants. I am not sure of that. Some peoples think that plants can be frightened and deceived just like human beings. I have got fresh and striking evidence of this (which will be used in the new edition of my book) from the Malay region. But the Malays have worked out the animistic theory more completely than the Australians, so perhaps we are not justified in attributing similar ideas of ~~it~~ to the latter. This is a point on which we want more evidence before deciding. But the point I made in my original letter to you as well as in my remarks at the Anthropological, namely that animals do not as a rule live upon their kind and hence that an ancestral man living on ancestral would be detected as a thumb by the real birds,

applies equally to plants, in regard to which I suppose the rule is universal that they do not live upon their kind, and hence that a grass-eed man stuffing himself with grass-seeds converts himself of infoshore. You say: "What seems to me more likely is that the idea is that too freely eating and killing produces an estrangement between the man and his totem so that he loses his influence over it and ~~can~~ cannot efficiently perform Antichristian." This seems to me to be merely saying in a negative form what I have said in a positive form. I say: "You must coincide the totem;" you say "you must not estrange it." What is the difference? How is estrangement avoided except by conciliatory conduct? Change your idea into the positive form, and I think you will find it difficult to distinguish it from mine. What I suppose the totem ~~is~~ man to avoid by eating the totem is precisely an estrangement between himself and the

totem and a consequent loss of influence over it, which is just what you suppose him to avoid by the same conduct.

Observe that the physical union of the man with his totem is promoted by eating the totem; the more ~~of~~ of the totem he eats, the more of its substance he will have in him, the more completely therefore will he actually be the totem. The refusal to eat the totem weakens the physical bond between the man and his totem; it must therefore surely be thought to strengthen the mental tie, the bond of good feeling and friendliness; in a word, it must be a measure of conciliation. The difference between us, such as it is, seems to be not so much in the idea of conciliation, as in its application, you thinking mainly of its application to the *Intichiuma* ceremonies for the multiplication of the animal, & I thinking mainly of its application to the magical ceremonies for making the animal come and be caught. Probably it applies to both. I have stated the theory in my article so as to cover both. There seems to me to be little or no

real difference of opinion ~~is~~ between us
on this head.

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Since I saw you I have been thinking
over the exogamy question. The
conclusions to which I have been coming
are briefly: 1) that the segmentation of a
tribe into two exogamous divisions was
intended to ~~be~~ avoid the marriage of
brothers with sisters; 2) that the subsequent
segmentation of each of these divisions into
two ^{exogamous subdivisions} with a rule of descent such that
children always belong to a different
subdivision from their parents and a
subdivision moreover into which their
parents may not marry, was intended
to avoid the marriage of parents with
children; ~~and~~ 3) that the subsequent
segmentation of each of these four subdivisions
into two exogamous sub-subdivisions was
intended to prevent the marriage of
grand-parents with ^{grand-}children; and 4)
that the reason why the rule of exogamy
was never applied to the totem class
of the Arunta and similar tribes was
that if so applied it would not
have served the only object which the

rule was introduced to effect, namely the
provision of marriages between brothers
and sisters and between ascendants
and descendants. I had thought of
writing an article on exogamy setting
out these conclusions and showing the
thorough weakness of McLennan's theory
when I had special Australian facts
(absence of female infanticide, absence

of system of capture, absence of
permanent state of hostility between
the groups). But on looking up Horvitz's
article 'Further notes on the Australian
class system' Journ. Anthropol. Inst. XVIII
(1889) to see whether he gave the rules of
descent in tribes where eight exogamous
subdivisions are found, I saw that he
had practically anticipated my conclusion
2) and 3) and as conclusion

of course Morgan's, there is no particular
need for me to write an article on the
subject, and I may content myself
at least for the present with stating
conclusion 4) in a note to my article on
Totemism.

I don't know how far you agree with
these conclusions. If they are well founded,
it seems that the root of the whole
system of exogamy is an aversion to
marriages between brothers and sisters (as
Morgan supposed). Now, what is the savage
reason for that aversion? Put byllon on
the track of this. I conjecture that it
is some superstition which we have not
yet fathomed. If so, the whole marriage
system of mankind stands on a shaky
foundation, unless it can be proved
that the close interbreeding, which the
marriage system prevents, has been on
the whole a benefit to the race. I
understand that biologists are not agreed
as to the evil or other effects of close
interbreeding. Have you views on the
subject?

I hear you are not standing
for the Oxford chair. Scientifically speaking
I am glad, though personally I am
sorry. Amicus Plato &c., so I am,
or ought to be, more glad than sorry.
The anthropological work still to be
done in Australia is, so far as I can

judge, of more importance for the early history
of man than anything else that can now
be done in the world. So I do not think
you will ever regret giving yourself to it,
and future generations will rise up and
call you blessed! How I wish we could
get Howitt relieved of his official work
for a year or two in order to give him-
self to the work of completing and putting
together his materials. Can you think of any
means of attaining that most desirable
object? Would a strongly worded and
signed memorial to the Victorian Govern-
ment by the University or scientific
societies here at home be likely to
have effect? Let me know. I would
do all I could to promote such a
memorial or anything else likely to
secure the object.

I offered Miss Howitt's MS. to
Macmillan, but they again refused it. Then I
sent it to A. Lang, asking him to use his
influence with Longmans. He did so, but
they also declined it. At present I am
thinking of offering it to the Cambridge Univ.
ersity Press. Jackson, who is on the Press
Syndicate, is reading it. At present he thinks
it would be better published in the
Anthrop. Journal; but I shall probably be
able to give you his final opinion (when
he has read it all) before I finish this infer-
mable letter. Jackson raised a difficulty;

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he pointed out that I have no direct authority from the authoress or her father to negotiate for the publication of the book. Probably Tylor **TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.** has such authority, so I wrote to him a few days ago to ask him whether he has authority, and if so whether he would consent to ~~the~~ my offering the book to the University Press. He has not answered yet. I fancy he may be a little sulky about totemism, especially the Intichiuma side of it. I may hear from him before I close this letter.

I have received from Macmillan a copy of the book. Very many thanks for it. It is a very handsome volume, not unworthy of the excellence of the contents. A friend to whom I lent it is reading it with great interest, though he is not an anthropologist at all.

My wife joins me in very kind regards. She thinks it kind of you (as it is) to remember about the dances, where you have so much else to think about. Please give my best regards to Fison and Howitt.

Yours very sincerely,
J. G. Frazer.

P. T. O.

9th. February. No word from Tylor yet. Perhaps he does not intend to answer.

Would you be so good as to learn from Miss Howitt or her father what they would wish me to do with the MS.?

Jackson has not finished reading it yet, but seems to adhere to his view that it would be better published in

the Anthropol. Journal than in the form of a book. Would Miss Howitt agree to this? Or shall I offer it to the Folklore Society? They might publish it as a volume, or if not as a volume certainly in "Folklore". I might also try A. and C. Black, the publishers of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. They published "Totemism". I am on good terms with them, but of course I should not like to recommend a volume to them unless it was likely to pay.