

FRAZER

Nelbourn.

(61)

Dec. 9. 03

My dear Frazer,

I am afraid that by some chance a few proof sheets which I sent home to you have miscarried. In connection with the subject of the rearrangement of the Arunta subclasses to make them fit into the Uvaturuna system I had written a footnote criticising Durkheim's remarks which appeared in *L'Année Sociologique* for 1902. On Aug. 5. I posted the proof to you and at the same time wrote asking your advice as to whether to publish the note or not. They cannot have reached

you as Macmillans write that they are missing and have sent out duplicates for correction. These sheets contain the abominable relationship matter so I have been plaguing them again and return them by the mail to Macmillans. Will you be

good enough to cross out anything which you think better omitted in the footnote on Durkheim - the whole thing if you think it advisable.

His article is full of misinterpretations and errors of various kinds. But it is vigorous & I thought it possibly advisable to refer to the point mentioned in the note. However I shall be quite content with your decision.

I have just had to write a long letter to Lang in reply to one of his enclosing a short paper by a Lutheran missionary named Stiefel stationed at the outlying Mission station in the S.W. corner of Armita Land. This station has been dragging along a miserable existence under the guidance of semi-educated Lutheran missionaries for 20 years past. Though filled & supplied have not worked in that part yet the missionaries are very hostile to us because they regard the native customs as "abominable" and any investigation into them impious. Twenty years ago a man named Kempe one of the first missionaries seized upon the word *Alhira* (= now *alchiri*) and adapted it as the word for "God". He knew nothing of its significance to

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Good night to cross out anything which you think better omitted in the footnote on Darkheim - the whole thing if you think it advisable.

His article is full of misinterpretations and errors of various kinds but it is vigorous & I thought it possibly advisable to refer to the point mentioned in the note. However I shall be quite content with your decision.

I have just had to write a long letter to Lang in reply to one of his enclosing a short paper by a Lutheran missionary named Stegler stationed at the outlying Mission station in the S.W. corner of Arunta Land. This station has been dragging along a miserable existence under the guidance of semi-educated Lutheran missionaries for 20 years past. Though filled & nearly full, they are very hostile to us because they regard the native customs as "abominable" and any investigation into them impious. Twenty years ago a man named Kauspe one of the first missionaries seized upon the word *Altyira* (= now *Alchéri*) and adopted it as the word for "God". He knew nothing of its significance to

the natives or of its association with
the word "alcherunga". (Alcheri =
dream. runga = of or belonging to) but
he saw that it had some special
or sacred significance. Now after
these twenty years (when the station has not
been closed or the missionaries away) of
~~the~~ endeavouring to reach the poor natives
that Altjira means "God" Strehlow comes
forward with the momentous discovery
that in the Arunta "there is a Being
of the highest order called Altjira or
Altjira mara" (mara = god). That
Wanyjirka has wife + child and "is the
leader of the circumcision". That "Altjira
is the highest divinity. He is the creator of
the world and maker of men" (sounds
rather scriptural). The paper only
occupies 1 1/2 ph - photocopy but has more
utter misleading nonsense packed into
a small space than I recollect having
come across before.

"Remarks" (hostile in tone to G. +
myself) are appended by some one - I

Nulbome

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don't know whom. & then the
 whole thing is forwarded to Lay
 who sends it on to me for
 personal comment prior to its
 translation & appearance in
 "Folk Lore". Lay says "of course
 it may be said that all
 my savage friends sell the
 missionaries to exactly the same tune
 as W. Howitt & other layman."

If the other evidence for a
 "High God" is on a par with this
 the whole thing is a perfect farce
 but what can one do. I have
 written to Lay thanking him for
 his courtesy in sending the ms.
 & criticizing it. Also I have
 addition to suggesting that possibly the
 native told Strehlow that *altiva*
 meant god because Strehlow had
 told him for many years past that

it did (and a savage is not altogether devoid of 'civility' when a good meal is in view) I have also drawn Lay's attention to the following naive remarks in Stedman's paper - "Merkwürdigerweise hat dies Wort Altjira eine große Ähnlichkeit mit Träumen (= altjirerema). Man kann nämlich in der heiligen Sprache von jedem Substantiv, etc. Verben bilden, indem man das Endings -a abwirft und die Endung erema, die ein werden, oder ilama die ein Machen ausdrückt, anhängt. Von der angegebenen Regel zurückzuschließen würde Altjira = Traum bedeuten. Freilich ziehen die Aranda (-Aranta) diesen Rückschluss nicht für Traum ab, abstraktum haben sie kein Wort. Doch scheint aus der Verwandtschaft dieser Wörter Altjira (gott) und Altjirerama (Träumen) hervorzugehen, dass ihr gott eben mehr ein traumhafter Wesen ist, ähnlich es wie gott, Realität besitzt."

I have also told Lay that after watching sundry initiation ceremonies

through from start to finish Stedman is talking rubbish when he speaks of Tiwayevika as the leader of the ceremonies and that the natives would no more allow S. to be present than they would tell him the whole truth: what they have told him is just what they tell the women. "Altjira" says Stedman, "passes as director of the dance + festivities." I have told Lay that, after spending months watching the natives preparing for + performing their ceremonies, to meet with their rubbish from a man who not only has never seen a ceremony but spends a good part of his time telling the few natives who frequent the station that all of their ceremonies are wicked, is rather too much of a good thing.

However if you see it stated that the Aranta can now be added to the long list of savages

haben them
für die
the
word
stems +
word
(pata
Tjirungga
and
rule
clinging).

tribes who believe in an "all-father"
& "High God" you will understand
what it means. The trouble is
how our people to determine what
is the truth and what is not.

I hope you keep well & are
making good headway with the G.B.
Don't you think that a holiday trip
out to Australia would do you &
Mrs. Gray much good.

Yours very sincerely

W. Aldwin Shewar.