

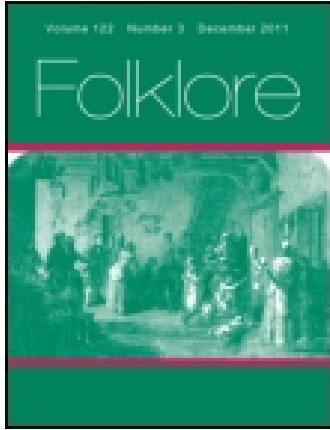
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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### AT THE BACK OF THE BLACK MAN'S MIND.

(*Supra*, p. 234.)

There are a few points in Miss Werner's criticism on my book, *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*, to which I would like to draw the attention of your readers.

Prof. van Gennep did not use the words "dignes de la kabbale" in reference to my book, but to a paper entitled "The Bavili Alphabet Restored," which appeared in the African Society's *Journal*. Miss Werner must therefore have misread his paper dated 15th January, 1907, in the *Revue des Idées*, entitled "Un Système Nègre de Classification," as I cannot believe she would have gone so far out of her way to cast a slur on the collection of facts and the categories which she was unable to digest until she lit on the clue supplied by van Gennep. Van Gennep, however, kindly gives me credit for giving this clue to the world so far as the Africans are concerned.

On the other hand, in a letter from a well-known archaeologist in regard to this article the latter writes: "I have read the *Revue des Idées* two or three times, and have gained nothing from repeated perusals." So that if Miss Werner really had difficulty in grasping the fact that I wrote about certain categories of thought among the Bavili and failed without van Gennep's help to grasp the fact, it should be some comfort to her that a distinguished man also failed to grasp van Gennep's meaning.

I am sorry Miss Werner should have been irritated by my use of 'x' for the sound 'tchi,' and also on account of my careful use of 'c' instead of 's.' I purpose to continue the use of 'x' and 'c' so far as Xivili is concerned, but I shall always inform my readers of the fact, as I have done in *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*. I maintain that philology has not said the last word on these points, and I claim the privilege of being allowed to dissent in these cases from the all too dogmatic conclusions of the Royal Geographical Society. Sounds convey a certain meaning to me, and the 'c' (as in 'city') in Bavili should in my opinion be preserved until it is finally proved that 'c' and 's' have the same meaning in that language.

Miss Werner says: "Neither is it at all probable that the prefix 'mu' has anything to do with 'mbu,' the sea." In the word 'mwici' (Bentley's 'mwixi'), haze, mist, it certainly has to do with moisture, and 'mu' and 'mbu' are both used for sea in the Congo. Further, if she will believe me, I can assure her that there are a great number of words in the 'mu' class, all relating to moisture and liquids.

From what Miss Werner says, it is evident that 'zila' as a verb in Zululand has come to mean 'to abstain from,' but there is no verb 'zila' in Xivili. Were such the case the negative 'ka' would give the verb an opposite sense, and 'ka zila' would mean 'not to abstain from.'

But anything appears to be possible, and a great deal probable, to the comparative etymologists in their search after roots, and I am sometimes forced to blush for them in their desire to go out of their way to solve what appear to me to be very simple problems. The Bavili have not been disturbed by constant invasions, they have not had change of environment to cause much alteration in their language, and I maintain that the Xivili dialect is nearer to Bleek's ideal of a mother Bantu stock than any other Bantu dialect. The probabilities are therefore that an everyday commonsense reading of their compound words will give my readers a much nearer and truer meaning of the word than any far-fetched foreign derivation.

Miss Werner says I cannot have the word for "four" written both ways (*ia* and *ya*).<sup>1</sup> I assure you I might have it written at least four ways, *ya*, *na*, *ia*, or *ba*; custom has, however, restricted us to three, viz., *ia*, *ya*, *na*. The Rev. P. Alex. Vissey in his dictionary writes the sound *ia*, while Bentley writes it *ya*. But why is Miss Werner so cruel in trying to deprive me of this slight variation, when in her next paragraph she claims that the words *Nzambi* and *Nyambi* (both Xivili) have ("pace Mr. Dennett") the same force? and this in spite of my having shown that *Nyambi* is the nephew of *Bunzi*, while the word *Nzambi* is used in our sense of the word "God" (a Trinity). By this I do not wish to infer that *Nyambi* is not used by the Duala and other tribes for our word God, but that among the Bavili, the people about whom the book is written, it is not. It is merely one of *Nzambi's* attributes.

*Ipon ri iku o feribo o*, or "the spoon is not afraid of hot water," as the Yorubas say, and while I am not particularly sensitive to destructive criticism (it is so easy), I feel, that for a review in a journal restricted to folk-lore, very little has been said of the book from a folk-lore point of view. I am, however, somewhat consoled by the fact that Miss Werner closes her not too accurate criticism by informing us that she purposes making a comparative study of the folk-tale on page 230 of my book. I am sure that anything Miss Werner writes on this subject will be most welcome to all those of us who take an interest in folk-lore.

R. E. DENNETT.

[We have inserted Mr. Dennett's letter, but at the same time we strongly deprecate the practice (we fear we must say the growing practice) of complaining of criticism. A man who is not prepared to face criticism had better not publish a book. We commend to Mr. Dennett and to others in like case the example of one of our most eminent and most criticised folk-

<sup>1</sup>[See *ante*, p. 238. Mr. Dennett has misunderstood Miss Werner. Her contention is, that if the syllable *ya* in *Nyambi* means *four*, it cannot at the same time be *ia*=to be.—ED.]

lorists, who is content to wait in dignified silence the verdict of time and science.—ED.]

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TRAVEL NOTES IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CORRECTION.

(Vol. xiii., p. 484.)

Mr. H. D. Hemsworth has called my attention to two mistakes which I have made in reporting the information he was kind enough to give me. I have referred to "the *Baperi* or Duiker clan" as one of the principal clans of the Shangaans. The fact is that the *Bapedi* or *Baperi* are a Basuto clan, which I knew; they are not a Shangaan clan, which I did not know, and therefore concluded that the *Bapedi* of whom Mr. Hemsworth was speaking belonged to the same people to whom the rest of his conversation related. The other mistake is less pardonable. The Duikers or *Baphuti* are a sub-clan of the *Bapedi*. The mistake in identifying them I can only attribute to carelessness in transcribing my rough notes made in the train, without stopping to consider or verify the terms. I am anxious to correct both blunders at the earliest possible moment; and I take full blame for them.

E. SIDNEY HARTLAND.

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THE CELTIC OTHER-WORLD.

(*Supra*, p. 339).

M. d'Arbois' letter does not dispose of Miss Hull's contention. The distinguished French scholar seems to think that Miss Hull's objection to his views is based wholly upon the outward aspect of the Irish "Other-world," and that he has only to defend himself against the assertion that he regards it "as a *dismal* Isle of Spirits." I believe that Miss Hull's objection is of a far deeper-seated and more thorough-going nature. Certainly mine

is. We claim that the Celtic Other-world was not, originally, at all events, a *séjour des morts*, an Isle of Spirits, at all; and we are unable to find any sound justification for the statement "chez les Celtes tous les morts sans exception arrivent au *Mag Mell*, à la plaine agréable." I confess I had hoped that the analysis of the Irish Other-world stories contained in my *Voyage of Bran* would have had some effect upon M. d'Arbois, would have induced him to revise and modify the sweeping assertions he made in the *Cycle Mythologique*, assertions which, when I reviewed the book in these columns twenty-three years ago, seemed to me very hazardous, and which, when ten years later I examined and discussed the entire extant body of evidence, seemed to me demonstrably erroneous. But alike here, and in the Introduction to his recently-issued instalment of a translation of the *Táin*, M. d'Arbois stiffly maintains his original position. It therefore seems needful that those who hold a different view should state in an equally categorical way that in the oldest mythic tales the Irish Other-world is *not* a Hades, a land to which all men, or even men generally, go after death, but is a god's land to which certain favoured mortals, and they alone, penetrate, and from which they may return. M. d'Arbois relies upon a passage in the *Echtra Conlta*; but even if this is correctly interpreted by him (and translations differ), it will only admit the deduction he draws from it thanks to a very strained exegesis. Apart from this text M. d'Arbois is compelled to have recourse to stories which, on the face of them, are post-Christian in date and betray manifest signs of being influenced by Christian eschatology. One of these is the story of Patrick's calling up Cuchulainn from the dead for the purpose of converting King Loegaire. Obviously this story must postdate the full development of the Patrick legend, and cannot well be older than the ninth century. Although therefore it does contain references to incidents of a character seemingly very archaic, still its late date and its nature compel the assumption that the original Irish view of the Other-world has been modified. The other story, which tells how Fergus was raised from the dead to recite the *Táin bó Cúalnge*, can only have come into existence after the part

taken by the seventh century Senchan Torpeist in welding together our existing version of the *Táin* had become matter for legend, in other words before the eighth century. And, as a matter of fact, the story was almost immediately made to assume a formal Christian character by the ascription of the feat to the Saints of Ireland. Failing these two late instances, I must emphatically reiterate that the early Irish stories of the Other-world are destitute of any eschatological significance or import. This indeed it is which constitutes their value; they, and with them an early stratum of Greek mythic story-telling, preserve the account of a non-eschatological Other-world which everywhere else in the Aryan world, among Scandinavians and Indo-Iranians, has suffered an eschatological change, has become a Hades.

In the *Voyage of Bran* I discussed two ideas: that of the Other-world, that of Re-birth. I demonstrated (conclusively, I venture to think) the organic kinship and correlation of the two conceptions. But I failed to notice one piece of evidence which, now that Miss Hull and M. d'Arbois have obliged me to think over the matter again, stares me in the face. I was struck by the fact that, apparently, the ancient Irish told no tales about the land of the dead; I was struck by the way in which the Classical references to the Celtic doctrine of re-birth emphasise the fact that, according to it, death is merely temporary, at all events for the valiant man; *he* comes back again to this world. If the classical observers are to be believed in their account of this doctrine, and if it was one which the insular Celts held equally with their Continental kinsmen, we see at once why the ancient Irish told no stories about a dead man's land; they did not believe that such a land existed. They would not trouble themselves about the churl and the craven, what became of them was subject for neither speculation nor fantasy; but as for the valiant fighter, the Celtic Achilles, his was not the lot so pathetically bewailed by his Homeric counterpart, he 'came back' and had the usual good time of an early Celtic hero: never did he retire to his couch without an enemy's head for his pillow, and he made love on a truly magnificent scale. And, highest of all



rewards the fancy of the race pictured for him, he might win to the Other-world, not to a realm of disembodied bloodless shadows, but to a land of which the divine inmates were immortally young and fair.

ALFRED NUTT.

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A BRITTANY MARRIAGE CUSTOM.

It is the custom in parts of Brittany for a girl just wedded to make an incision under the left breast immediately the ceremony in church is over. The bridegroom then applies his lips and sucks a drop of her blood. I have been informed of this curious custom by M. Jean Guyot de Villeneuve, the well-known French politician, who, however, could not tell me what significance attaches thereto in the popular mind. Can it be the object of it to make the man of one blood and kin with the woman, so that the children may be of her kin? It seems to resemble the wide-spread rite of blood-brotherhood, so well described in Trumbull's *The Blood Covenant* (New York, 1885). I should be glad to learn if the survival of such a custom among the Bretons is generally known.

F. C. CONYBEARE.

I have noted a number of these cases in the *Legend of Perseus*, vol. ii., pp. 338 sqq., and I have since discovered more, but none of them from Brittany. In *Folklore*, vol. xvi., p. 337, there is a South-Welsh story of a salmon-girl who kisses the hero with a bloody mouth, so as to leave her blood upon his face: this binds him to her. Again, in vol. xvii., p. 114, Mr. Crooke notes that in the South of Ireland if a little boy hurts a girl playfellow so as to draw blood, his nurse says to him, "Now you'll have to marry her." On the other hand, in the story of *The Wooing of Emer*, when Cuchulainn sucks from Devorgoil's wound the stone that had struck her from his sling, he becomes her blood-brother, and cannot therefore marry her. Here we have Welsh, Bretons, and modern Southern

Irish concurring in one view of the effect of a rite, in opposition to the ancient North Irish, who are found to have held a totally different view.

I should like to know in what parts of Brittany this custom is, or used to be, practised. The North Bretons must be closely akin to the South Welsh: they understand one another without an interpreter.

E. SIDNEY HARTLAND.

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FOLK-SONG REFRAIN.

Not long ago I heard the nursery song, "Froggy would a-woooing go," sung in Ripon with the following refrain:

"Kimināry keemo,  
Kimināry keemo.  
Kimināry kiltikāry, Kimināry keemo.  
String stram pammadilly, lamma pamma rat tag,  
Ring dong bomminnanny keemo."

Are these syllables slang, or Romany, or some old lesson, or an attempt to render other sounds, musical or natural, or only very sonorous gibberish? A variant of them may be found in Mr. Joseph Jacob's *English Fairy Tales* (1892), p. 72 (illustration); cf. note, p. 236.

H. M. BOWER.

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THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER AND GUY FAWKES.

(Vol. xiv., pp. 89-91, 175-6, 185-8.)

In *Guernsey Folk-Lore*, edited by Edith F. Carey from MSS. of the late Sir Edgar MacCulloch (1903), p. 36, I read:

"On the last night of the year it was customary (and the practice has not altogether fallen into desuetude) for boys to dress up a grotesque figure, which they called "Le vieux bout

de l'an," and after parading it through the streets by torch-light with the mock ceremonial of a funeral procession, to end by burying it on the beach, or in some other retired spot, or to make a bonfire and burn it."

A note by the editor adds:—"Hence the country people's term for the effigy of Guy Fawkes on the 5th of November, 'le vieux bout de l'an.'"

Is it not likely, however, that the figure now transformed into Guy represented the finish of the agricultural year, and that thus it was "le bout de l'an" in the exact sense?

A few years ago I said in *Folk-Lore* that here at Kirton-in-Lindsey, it was not customary to have a Guy with the 5th of November bonfire. Now, I am told that "th' lads 'll sometimes make a straw-man and dress him up in old things, because it pleases 'em to burn him at end of green."

M. PEACOCK.

[Will the Editor of *Guernsey Folklore* be so good as to tell us anything she can of the observance (past and present) of "Guy Fawkes' Day" in Guernsey, or of any analogous November customs there? Such evidence might throw valuable light on the connection between Guy Fawkes' and Hallowmas bonfires, long surmised by collectors of English folklore, but not proven.—ED.]

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