

Copy & return to
Bro Pat

Jan 4, 1968

Dear David Aberle:

I have been terribly remiss in not answering your fine letter and thanking you for all the bibliography. I was able to get over to the U. of Kentucky and they do indeed have Curtis on reserve there. I was able to examine it and get knocked off my feet by the wonderful quality of those photographs. They are magnificent. I have never seen such things. A most unique record of a vanished world. I have also got into some of the other books and will be after the magazine articles in due course. Unfortunately at the end of November my work on this was interrupted and I haven't been able to get back to it until now. And I am not really back in the swing of it yet.

What I am doing is actually a long poem, mostly about the Ghost Dance (at least in this part of it) and what I need most of all is original texts. I have picked up the paperback reprint of Mooney and that is rich in material. Incidentally, I am very much awed by people like Mooney: they have made me see the great importance of anthropology and of certain approaches to it: a kind of humanistic and religious dimension which seems to me to make anthropology suddenly one of the areas where light is thrown on a theology that has largely ceased to make sense in its professional jargon. As they are also discovering in literature. So I think (horrible and heretical as it may sound) I have to explore the possibilities of a sort of literary and anthropological crypto-theology as an area where one might conceivably come up with a quiet, unspoken, implicit message that says more than all the sermons. One man who has done this I think is ~~Burk~~ Burdige in his Mambu (Melanesian cargo cults). Of course he has not been as irresponsible as I sound: sticking to his real job, he has nevertheless said things with moving implications just as Mooney did for the Ghost Dance people.

So you see I am most happy to be in touch with you and hope to keep in touch. Also-- more favors-- I am starting a small magazine which will run on no money and be given out free. We can run it out here on offset. It will be literary mostly but I also need interesting texts from Asia and from the North American Indians. Poems, songs, legends, or things about them. Thus you see that I am asking you for material of this kind: not much space, but either original texts or brief and "creative" (pardon the madness) interpretations, or maybe a rant in the style of John Collier... I leave you to judge. If the material has appeared elsewhere it doesn't matter as long as it has been in a tucked away sort of a place. I can't write more now, but I wish you a happy New Year and want to stay in touch, regarding all kinds of Indians not just Dakota. Blessings and peace.