

# ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE END OF EMPIRE

## **Introduction**

In this chapter I describe the evolving relationship between the discipline of social anthropology and the main funder of social research in Britain in the years after the Second World War – the Colonial Office. The Colonial Social Science Research Council (CSSRC) funded a whole generation of anthropological researchers, and a major programme of training and research institutes in Africa: all the key building blocks of an academic discipline.

The story begins in the dark days of war, and with the networks of reformers who sought to influence British Colonial Office policy. At home, debate about the eventual post-war reconstruction of Britain led to plans for the building of a new ‘welfare state’. At the same time, the British Colonial Office began to develop an ambitious blueprint for a new ‘developmental’ empire to complement domestic reconstruction plans. Known as the Colonial Development and Welfare (CDaW) Act, this major piece of legislation was passed in 1940, and sought to transform and revitalise the British colonial state (Butler 1991, 1999). Wartime collectivism and a vogue for strategic planning led to a highly ambitious £120 million spending programme. A programme of social science research would inform planning decisions.

Two of Malinowski’s students ensured that anthropology was well placed to influence CSSRC deliberations. Audrey Richards was a family friend of the imperial reformer Lord Hailey, and had worked with him

on the influential *African Survey* (Hailey 1938). Her aristocratic background provided her with the social connections and confidence to lobby effectively for the discipline. As a result, Raymond Firth, a serious-minded New Zealander, who worked for British Naval Intelligence during the war, became the Council's first secretary.

Once established, the Council provided extensive funding and support for the research into colonial social 'problems' that would inform 'development' planning. An elaborate programme of grants, studentships and regional research institutes was designed. The key challenge facing the CSSRC in its first years was finding appropriately trained people willing to serve in the colonies. It was a gap that anthropologists were all too happy to fill. The Council tended to be dominated by LSE academics, leading to tensions within the discipline over the distribution of funding. The grants, fellowships and research centres played a vital role in securing the institutional fortunes of social anthropology, providing students and staff with many opportunities to conduct research.

### **An empire of moral purpose? The Colonial Development and Welfare Act**

The idea that the state could be an agent of reform had been gaining in popularity in Britain since the turn of the century. The writings of John Maynard Keynes provided an influential justification of state intervention, and the American experience of the 'New Deal' was also much discussed in domestic policy circles. This began to influence thinking within the Colonial Office, as did the increasingly critical public debate around the 'colonial question' during the 1930s. Gradually the colonial empire began to be seen 'more as a whole, and as a stage upon which more interventionist and generally applicable policies might be evolved, beginning with Colonial Development and Welfare' (Hyam 1999, 257). The Colonial Office began to see that the emerging consensus about domestic social and economic problems could also be applied to the colonies.

Prior to 1940, there had been virtually no government funding for British social science research in Africa. The first Colonial Development Act of 1929 was primarily concerned with reducing unemployment in the UK (Morgan 1980). This contrasts with the Australian National Research Council, which sponsored many of its doctoral students, including the first fieldwork trips of Raymond Firth, Phyllis Kaberry and Ralph Piddington, all of whom went on to play an influential role in British anthropology.

My story begins at a meeting in Whitehall at the Carlton Hotel on 6 October 1939. The war had just begun. Called by the Secretary of State Malcolm MacDonald, it was attended by a group of colonial reformers and writers associated with the Fabians. Present too was the larger-than-life scion of British imperial reform – Lord Hailey (Cell 1992; Wolton 2000).

The Secretary of State briefed the meeting. Dampening expectations of a major new policy shift, instead he raised three topics for discussion, of which ‘the policy with regard to land is fundamental to everything else’. He insisted that ‘we need more knowledge on this subject’. The best way forward, he suggested, would ‘be a series of local inquiries’ rather than a royal commission. Lord Hailey characteristically pointed out that the object of the meeting was ‘not to decide what policy ought to be adopted, but to explore what investigations it might be useful to initiate with a view to arriving at a policy’. The emphasis on careful planning and research was taken up by Margery Perham, an influential public spokesperson on colonial affairs and an important reformer, who commented that ‘land could not be studied in isolation’. She opined that ‘a new technique of study was needed. There might be three or four experts, each knowledgeable in a different subject, investigating the whole range of these subjects co-operatively.’<sup>1</sup> The stress laid on the importance of a carefully planned and prioritised multi-disciplinary research model echoed Hailey’s own views in the *African Survey* (Hailey 1938). The conversation went on to discuss the economics of this new colonial settlement and the major investment it would need from Britain.

What lay behind this new altruistic vision? Much of it was motivated by self-interest and self-image, and the difficulty of defending the colonial project to a much-needed political ally – the USA. As Hyam notes, MacDonald was anxious to make the colonial position in wartime unassailable. It was ‘essential to get away from the old principle that Colonies can only have what they themselves can afford to pay for’ (Hyam 1999, 275). A second factor was the influential Moyne report, compiled on economic and social conditions in the British Caribbean islands after a period of anti-colonial protest that the Colonial Office euphemistically called ‘disturbances’. Lord Moyne recommended that a ‘West Indian Welfare Fund’ be established to finance colonial development in those particular colonies.

The final piece in this new modernist jigsaw was Lord Hailey’s voluminous *African Survey* (Hailey 1938), a multi-authored Carnegie-sponsored report into ‘economic and social conditions in Africa’. A highly influential survey, it became an urtext for British colonial reformers and social scientists. Sally Chilver notes that within weeks of its publication it was ‘as familiar an object on the desks in the Colonial Office as ... the Imperial Calendar’ (Chilver 1957, 121), and that ‘there

can have been few books that have exercised such a direct influence on policy'. Key to its significance was its proposal for the wholesale reorganisation of colonial research and enquiry. Together these factors convinced MacDonald of the importance of including a special research fund within the planned Colonial Development and Welfare (CDaW) Act. They went to visit the Chancellor of the Exchequer together. He was clearly amenable, for the new act was passed in 1940, at one of most difficult moments of the war. It allowed for a spending of five million pounds annually for ten years, and more significantly, another £500,000 for research each year. It was an impressive sum of money.

With the publication of the *African Survey* Lord Hailey had come to be regarded as a principal spokesman for colonial reform and development. He was never an academic, and after an influential career in the Indian Civil Service, he had been chosen to lead the survey precisely because of his lack of African experience – he would bring a 'fresh eye' to the task, and be able to dispassionately assess the evidence.

He was first offered the opportunity to carry out the survey in 1933, but he had no idea that the task was so enormous, and would almost overwhelm him. Its ponderous compendiousness is both a strength and a weakness, providing what now might be described as a 'baseline' survey of colonial and African systems of governance in sub-Saharan Africa. It was written by a team of scholars, including Lucy Mair and Audrey Richards, who were seconded to the Colonial Office during the war. The experience convinced him that anthropology could play an important role in informing development policies (Hailey 1944). However, the report's emphasis is determinedly administrative, with chapters on 'native administration', 'the problems of labour' and 'African economic development'. In some ways the most influential part of this text was the conclusion. It was here that Hailey recommended a broad programme of 'research', a term he carefully gave a wide connotation, describing it as 'studies either of an abstract or (to use a convenient term) of a practical nature' (Hailey 1938, 1611). He demonstrated how previous research had been 'in response to an unrelated series of demands rather than as the outcome of comprehensive planning', and so made a strong case for 'liberal assistance from the British Treasury' (ibid., 1629) for a new fund. It was a view of the relationship between research and policy that was increasingly common in the USA. His ideas were taken seriously, and plans began to be drawn up for the coordination and funding of research as part of the CDaW Act.

## **The Colonial Research Committee and the CSSRC**

After the CDaW Act was published on 20 February 1940, Secretary of State Malcolm MacDonald wrote to Hailey congratulating him on his role in its creation, and asking Hailey to be chair of a new Colonial Research Advisory Committee, for 'the general scheme for colonial research is so much your own project, and one which I know you have so deeply at heart'.<sup>2</sup>

A month later, the Secretary of State wrote again to suggest possible committee members, including up to fifteen scientists and even 'a business man connected with one of the big companies, such as Imperial Chemicals'. MacDonald went on to write that 'the selection of members to represent the somewhat wide field of sociological research may perhaps be a matter of greater difficulty'. This was a moment to express his reservations about these new sciences. 'The trouble of course, is that sociological research covers such a very wide and divergent field, and it will be very difficult indeed to get together a really representative and harmonious committee to tackle this work.' Then things get even more sticky:

One special point on which I shall wish to consult you on your return is whether an anthropologist should be included on the committee. I felt that I shall be pressed later on to include an anthropologist, but I gather that it will be rather difficult to find one who has not his own personal axe to grind, and I am told that in any case anthropologists, as a class, are rather difficult folk to deal with.<sup>3</sup>

Hailey duly responded to these thoughts. Diplomatically ignoring the implied criticisms of the social sciences, he pointed to those academic disciplines that MacDonald's proposed representatives might not be able to cover. Of these, he felt that geology and anthropology particularly deserved particular attention. Agreeing that 'it is true that anthropologists are difficult folk to deal with', Hailey pointed out that 'there are many people, not themselves professional anthropologists, who will constantly make it their business to remind you, that it is useless to provide for enquiry into the physical sciences, unless you consider also the human elements to which the result of these enquiries must be applied'. He went on to suggest that 'some of the colonial governments would feel the committee to be incomplete, unless this side of the enquiry were represented'.

In a veiled reference to nascent anti-colonial movements, he noted that both the Gold Coast and Kenya had recently admitted to 'grave gaps in their knowledge of the native social organisations with which they have to deal'. Hailey acknowledged MacDonald's concern regarding the 'limits within which support should be given to

anthropological studies by a body such as that which you are establishing.' 'Its aim,' he went on:

is not primarily to encourage academic study ... it is limited to discovering those things which our administration must know if it is to make the best use of its resources for the development of the people in the colonies. In looking for an anthropologist therefore, our main object should be to seek someone whose experiences enable him to help in estimating the social factors which must be taken into account if our technical or administrative agencies for development are to operate with success.

Insisting that the committee's focus should be on the social factors 'if our technical or administrative agencies for development are to operate with success,' Hailey put forward two 'very suitable' names, Edwin Smith (an ex-missionary, and one of the founders of the IAI) and Raymond Firth, and commented that the latter 'would perhaps be more acceptable to the younger school of anthropologists'.<sup>4</sup> Firth, one of Malinowski's protégés, had published *We, the Tikopia* in 1936. He was shortly to be made Professor of Anthropology at LSE (London School of Economics). Whilst Firth wasn't appointed to the umbrella Colonial Research Council, his work as secretary to the CSSRC did much to secure research funding for the discipline within British universities over the subsequent two decades.

Despite the fanfare with which the Colonial Development and Welfare Act was launched, very little happened at first, given the seriousness of the war. The matter was raised again by the new Secretary of State Lord Cranborne in June 1942, as a result of a number of research funding applications to the Government from the social sciences. Without quick decisions, he foresaw a 'danger that the academic bodies concerned might feel obliged to proceed with their individual plans and that this might lead to uneconomical and inconvenient dispersion of activity in these fields of colonial studies'.

As a result the Colonial Research Committee was finally convened in 1943. A committee of seven began their work immediately, holding one meeting a month. Alexander Carr-Saunders, a demographer and the new director of the LSE, represented social sciences. Audrey Richards, a close friend of Lord Hailey, was brought onto the committee a year later, and had a good deal of influence over its subsequent development.

The Secretary of State Lord Cranborne addressed their first meeting. He suggested that the terms of the act referred to 'research and enquiry', in the widest possible sense, covering both pure and applied research, such that the committee's function in coordinating research was as important as recommending grants for expenditure. Despite his administrative background, Hailey revealed his increasing support for

academic research, stating his determination that the committee's goal should be the pursuit of scientific 'truth'. As the first annual report notes, 'the committee should not confine itself to examining proposals put to it by Colonial Government ... it conceives it as its duty to study the whole field of scientific inquiry; to distinguish the parts of it requiring attention, and to ensure that gaps in it are filled wherever possible to do so'.<sup>5</sup> It goes on to express concern about the 'tendency for research problems to be dictated too exclusively by local and temporary interests, without due regard to scientific possibilities'. The comprehensiveness and scope of the committee's self-appointed remit inevitably echoed the ambitions and interdisciplinary self-confidence of Hailey's *African Survey* (1938) and Worthington's *Science in Africa* (1938).

Small groups of experts were commissioned during 1943 to review the present state of all the various scientific disciplines. 'The inadequacy of the data' from the social sciences and the 'difficulties dealing with this subject', were seen as problems, partly because 'there is no organisation acting for the social sciences'. The 'Colonial Social Research Group' report emphasised the inadequacies and lacunae in extant knowledge.<sup>6</sup> One of its first recommendations was that 'the need for social research in the colonies is evident ... very few social surveys of general standards of living have been done, and of these hardly any have been in charge of trained investigators. In some colonies no general ethnographic surveys have been made, and there are no descriptive accounts of the chief ethnic groups.' Again, one senses the magnitude of the task foreseen, and yet the need for such detail for rational welfare and development planning. This group of 'experts' went on to recommend the founding of a Social Research Council. Recognising that 'the field of social research is so wide that it cannot easily be covered by any one expert', the group saw this new council as playing a co-ordinating role in the expansion of the social sciences. Again, the limiting factor was seen as the shortage of people with 'specialised training'. The presumption that 'knowledge of a particular language or residence in some particular area is sufficient' qualification for research was gently dismissed. Instead, anthropological expertise and skills in conducting large-scale social surveys were particularly prioritised.

The report of the Social Research Group begins ecumenically, admitting that 'we have found it impossible to fix any exact boundaries to the field of social research. Because "primitive" and "advanced" communities live "side by side" in the colonial territories research in the social field must be wider in scope than is usual in this country and investigators of more varied types may be required for it.' The report goes on to attempt to define anthropology as a broadly inclusive project. Later in the report there is, however, a steady slippage from

Hailey's call for a multidisciplinary approach to the narrower concerns of academic anthropology.

The recommendations went on to focus on employment and training issues, emphasising the shortage of trained staff to carry out the necessary research. Isolation, poor conditions, and short-term funding contracts were all seen as pressing problems. Rather than creating special departments of colonial studies or colonial anthropology, the report recommended the expansion of existing UK university departments in UK universities, as these topics 'can only be approached as part of the general study of the field'. Establishing departments of social science at Makerere or Achimota was also strongly supported, and seen as an 'integral part of future programmes in social research'.

Noting that 'in some cases trained anthropologists have been forced to take up other professions', the authors comment that 'it is therefore not surprising that there are now few anthropological field workers with the qualifications necessary to undertake the conduct of one of the large scale ethnographic or general social and economic surveys to which we give priority value'. It ends unequivocally with the importance of making provision for the expansion of anthropology and sociology departments 'if the increased demands for training envisaged' were to be met. At this point only Oxford, Cambridge and London had funded anthropology lectureships.

This document closely determined the evolution of the new Colonial Social Science Research Council (CSSRC) and its history over the next eighteen years. Formally appointed by government legislation in 1944, the CSSRC was the first government body to represent, organise and fund social sciences, and played a key role in financing and institutionalising these embryonic disciplines. At the very moment that social anthropology was converting from an informal 'band of brothers' into an expanding academic discipline, the CSSRC provided it with financial support and prestige.

### **The CSSRC at work: 'the right man in the right project at the right time'**

With the change in wartime fortunes, partly because of the huge contributions in men and resources made by the colonies to the war effort, and the involvement of the USA, the Colonial Office became increasingly aware of its responsibilities to justify trusteeship and to plan for post-war development. The CSSRC wasted no time in developing its ambitions. Its first meeting was an informal one, called in June 1944 at the Colonial Office to discuss Audrey Richards's



impending fact-finding visit to East Africa. The particular issue at question was a proposal from the principal of Makerere College to develop a humanities degree with a social science component. Richards was in no doubt that, on the contrary, developing a research agenda should be the council's first priority. Citing the lack of literature appropriate for teaching, everyone agreed that 'emphasis should rest on research *ab initio*, as this would form the basis of the teaching of social subjects later'. Monica Wilson, widow of Godfrey Wilson, the first head of the RLI (Rhodes Livingstone Institute), was mentioned as a possible person to lead such research. Already the importance of the RLI as a model for a training ground for future generations of anthropologists had been recognised.

The first formal meeting of the council was held a month later, with Carr-Saunders of the LSE as chair, and Raymond Firth (now also an LSE professor) as the newly appointed secretary. As he had done the previous month, Carr-Saunders again laid out the extensive work facing the council. This time he also pointed to the lack of an umbrella organisation to represent the social sciences, leading him to call for the 'closest liaison' between the disciplines. Procedure was discussed, and it was agreed to rely not upon formal subgroups of 'experts', but rather on each member of the council representing one of the eight disciplines that had originally submitted reports. Firth later produced a discussion document on the council's general policy, suggesting that 'linguistic and socio-economic studies' should be 'major aims for systematic research in the first instance, covering successive territories'. Firth suggested that this would provide 'basic data for colonial governments and for research in other disciplines', and also rapidly secure 'a body of personnel with some knowledge of colonial conditions and local research techniques'. These surveys 'would offer opportunity for collaboration among several disciplines (sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, statistics)'. Where would all this start? Given the importance of regional concentration, wrote Firth, 'Africa would appear to be an obvious first choice'.<sup>7</sup>

At this first meeting there was extensive discussion of both the research priorities and the training and employment of colonial researchers. Indicative of the discipline's dominance, the minutes noted that 'the council was of the opinion that the programme of ANTHROPOLOGICAL [*sic*] work was most important, as it formed a basis for so many of the other sciences with which it was necessary that it should be closely associated in field work'.<sup>8</sup>

There is little doubt that the members of the CSSRC saw themselves as intellectual pioneers, leading the way both in mapping out uncharted territories of African social research problems, and in trailblazing the new possibilities for a problem-oriented multidisciplinary social science.

The council met monthly in the Colonial Office, and gradually research priorities began to be established. The first annual report exhaustively lists the series of 'major' and 'urgent' research needs, including 'surveys of social and economic conditions in urban and rural areas', 'comparative studies of local government', the 'effects of migratory labour', 'political development in "plural" communities', not to mention studies of land tenure and colonial administrative law. The council accepted that the 'emphasis on the practical applications of research was appropriate'.<sup>9</sup>

As the council began to define its work, Firth circulated a memo to colonial governments. He listed the council's primary functions as:

the review of the organisation of research in the social sciences in the colonies (including the selection, training, and terms of service of research workers) ii) the scrutiny of particular schemes of research submitted for approval iii) the initiation of proposals for research in fields not otherwise covered and iv) advice as to the publication of results of research.<sup>10</sup>

Of these, the heaviest burden on council members was the administration and selection of research grants. The meetings constantly returned to the issue of the shortage of candidates suitable and willing to work in the colonies. For senior scholars, one problem was the difficulty of obtaining leave from universities. For more junior researchers, the perceived need was for specialist research training – at this time there were no government funds for anthropology research students.

In the very first meeting of the CSSRC, Firth proposed that he do an informal canvassing for possible candidates for research funding. This led him to come up with a list of thirty (unnamed) possibles, of which six 'had expressed willingness to undertake research work under the auspices of the colonial office'. None were considered of high enough calibre to be awarded one of the colonial research fellowships, and he suggested that 'they would work best in teams, or under the direction of a senior research worker'. Firth envisaged an 'emergency' training programme for this new cadre of young graduates, with metropolitan universities (he named Cambridge, Oxford and London) providing the main source of training, and the regional institutes providing social science research workers with 'special knowledge of local conditions'. Firth also advocated that the training should encourage 'the expansion of knowledge gained in one discipline into a broader social field ... the object here should be to weld on to the specialised equipment of the particular research worker a general knowledge of the principles of social and economic structure which will condition so much of the material he will be required to investigate'. Despite the

rhetoric of interdisciplinarity, the emphasis on 'social and economic structure' was unmistakably anthropological.

Under the terms of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act £500,000 annually was earmarked for research. This aspect of the act that had the most visible impact. Even though only a small proportion of this money went to the social sciences, it was enough to fund a major multidisciplinary research agenda, a large number of research fellowships, and four high-profile regional research institutes in Africa and the Caribbean. Grants were given to individuals for a whole variety of research topics, varying within anthropology from studies of African land tenure systems to linguistics, local economies and 'traditional' law. Support was also initially given to the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures to continue its extensive research surveys, including the *Handbook of African Languages* and the *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*. Funding for the regional institutes was less tied to particular research projects.

Two major concerns dominated council proceedings – the selection, training, supervision and support of researchers and the development of the regional institutes. Both led to conflict. Initially, there was disagreement within the council about the best use of its money. A question mark hung over formal research training schemes, and whether these fitted the council's remit. In 1944, Carr-Saunders expressed the non-anthropologists' concern about the youth and inexperience of the candidates, such that it 'would be quite impossible to allow most of them to go out to the colonies and work independently, even after a period of training'.<sup>11</sup> Raymond Firth responded by insisting that the programme would be strictly short-term, without which it would be 'impossible to meet the demands which would be made' for sociological researchers. A compromise was agreed: the scheme would be set up, but each application would be submitted to the council for consideration of details of pay, leave, length of training, etc.

In 1947 the council awarded the first twelve postgraduate studentships. These provided six to twelve months' research training, following which students 'were required to undertake a specific priority research project of about two year's duration, in one or other of the Colonial territories'. The training was deliberately not tied to a specific project in advance, for it was recognised that candidates 'may yet have no clear ideas of the exact field of research for which their aptitudes fit them, or of the locality or problem to which they would be most attracted'.<sup>12</sup> Amongst the first students were M.G. Smith, Edwin Ardener, John Middleton and Frank Girling, all of whom went on to make important contributions to social anthropology. The following year the scheme was extended, somewhat controversially, to allow

Fulbright scholars and other American students to receive training at British universities in preparation for 'field work in the colonies'. In total twenty-one students received these studentships, and, by 1951, the CSSRC annual report showed that the council was much more confident about the recruitment situation, noting that the 'field for junior appointments to regional Research Institutes appears to be fairly large'. The council awarded few further research fellowships, and by 1955 had announced that the funds available for individual research were 'severely limited', with priority increasingly accorded to the research institutes. Chilver suggested that 'it was felt that the discipline had been given a shove' and should now be developing its own resources.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the 1940s, concern over recruitment and training continued to dominate discussion. As the 1947 CSSRC annual report noted in the gendered language of the time, 'the greatest difficulty may be summarised as that of bringing the right man to the right project in the right place at the right time ... [but] the chief difficulty is still that of finding the right man'. The same concerns were voiced by the Colonial Research Council itself, which voiced its concern over the 'danger of taking second-rate men because of the shortage of first-rate men [*sic*],' noting that 'it would be preferable to let the schemes grow as and when first class workers become available'.<sup>14</sup>

### **'Centres of research and learning in the colonies themselves'**

The wartime deliberations of the Colonial Research Committee had dwelt on the 'special difficulties' of carrying out research in the colonies. This was blamed upon both the lack of UK departments 'responsible for the conduct of detailed investigations', and the non-existence of departments of social studies within colonial institutes of higher education. Audrey Richards had an innovative solution – building up an independent academic research capacity within the colonial territories. The issue of 'isolation and restricted opportunities for colonial research workers' would also be 'greatly mitigated if centres of research and learning could be developed in the colonies themselves'.<sup>15</sup> This would also solve problems of independence and continuity. Richards was one of the keenest exponents of the development of regional research institutes in the colonies, and she joined the committee at this time. The biological and agricultural sciences already had established field-research stations, but for the social sciences the obvious precedent was the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (RLI) in Northern Rhodesia, an independent foundation

created five years earlier in 1938 (Schumaker 2001). It had been set up at the instigation of the colony's Governor, with funding from local mining companies, and a remit to apply anthropology to problems of social change. Makerere (in Kampala, Uganda) and Achimota (in Ghana), which at that point were government-funded technical colleges, were equally cited as places where research facilities could be built up, to go from being centres of 'vocational training' to 'real centres of learning in the Colonies'.

This development became the second key role of the CSSRC. It was a highly ambitious undertaking. Over the fifteen years the institutes eventually consumed more than a million pounds of the council's budget, twice as much as that directed at individual research projects. Even at the very first meeting of the council in 1944, Max Gluckman's plans to expand the RLI in Northern Rhodesia were discussed (Gluckman 1944, 1945). It differed from the other institutes, in having been previously set up (in 1938) as an independent social science research institute with no university attachment. Its importance lay in the precedent that it set for the council's own plans for further regional institutes in West and East Africa and the Caribbean. Yet the process of setting up regional centres for social studies was far from straightforward. To whom would they be accountable? Should they be part of the university colleges, or wholly separate? Should Colonial Development and Welfare funding go into buildings and infrastructure? Could 'high-quality' staff be recruited? I focus particularly on Makerere: plans for the East African Institute for Social Research (EAISR) were the first to develop, and were the most ambitious of the regional research institutes (Chilver 1951).

Establishing such an institute at Makerere College meant intervening in the fraught politics of regional colonial policy: this was a university college for the whole of East Africa but located in Uganda. Many Ugandans were against any attempt at creating an East African federation. There was also institutional politics to attend to. The 1944 Asquith Commission on Higher Education had unequivocally recommended the development of such institutes, but had strongly advised against the creation of a 'semi-independent' social science unit at Makerere, which might diminish 'the authority and prestige of the university'.<sup>16</sup> Audrey Richards, the key council advocate for the institutes, was rather differently minded. After her visit to Uganda in 1944 she made a strong case for 'a separate institute, that the staff should be free from routine teaching duties, and that the Director should have power to frame research programmes'. Such dissension from official policy had to be justified, and the council developed the case that the effective teaching of social studies depended first on the accumulation of 'a body of knowledge on sociological and kindred

matters in East Africa'.<sup>17</sup> Prioritising research was a way to avoid the danger that staff would have to 'devote an undue proportion of their time to routine teaching duties', whilst still allowing the eventual aim of merging the institute into the University.

One solution was to create dedicated research fellowships. Following the example set by Rockefeller and the IALC (International Institute for African Languages and Cultures), the idea of establishing research fellowships 'nominally stationed at Makerere or Achimota'<sup>18</sup> was well received, and Hailey proposed that the Treasury be asked to fund five such fellowships a year for outstanding scholars. Max Marwick and Aidan Southall were the first social anthropologists to receive such fellowships, when the East African Institute was finally established. A lack of 'high-quality' candidates, partly because no funding was available for research students, led to a later focus on postgraduate training, and a studentship scheme was established, to the benefit of a generation of anthropologists, including M.G. Smith, Vernon Sheddick, Philip Gulliver and Jeremy Boissevan.

Richards's plans envisaged a well-resourced research institute, equipped with staff, dwellings and offices. Next, a potential director needed to be found. Raymond Firth recommended William Stanner, an Australian anthropologist who had been a member of Malinowski's seminar. Strong reservations about Stanner were expressed by the Governor of Uganda. These included the concern that he had no economic training, and that in 'view of the recent conversion to Christianity of Africans in Uganda it was also advisable that he should not be a militant rationalist'. He was nevertheless selected, and eventually paid a visit to Makerere in 1948 to report on the progress made with the institute. He made much of the political complexities of the situation, questioning even the wisdom of its implementation. This was exactly what the committee did not want to hear, and there was much discussion of other possible locations, and ways of surmounting the difficulties that Stanner seemed to be presenting. Max Gluckman was secretly pleased, and wrote in 1948 from Oxford in 'semi-confidence' to Clyde Mitchell to say that 'Stanner has recommended, we hear, that the Makerere Institute be dropped which leaves us unique'.<sup>19</sup> Stanner eventually resigned in 1949 and was replaced by Audrey Richards, the initial architect of the East African Institute for Social Research (EAISR). Richards resigned from the council in order to successfully establish and run the institute for six years (Mills 2006).

She was replaced as director in 1957 by the anthropologist Aidan Southall, who had first lectured in social studies at Makerere (1945–48) and then been a research fellow at EAISR (1949–54) after doing a master's degree at LSE. Fluent in Lwoo, he was unusual in deciding to stay on in Africa rather than returning to the UK to pursue

his academic career. In 1957 he was simultaneously appointed to the first Professorship of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Makerere, part of the university's attempt to involve the centre more closely in the life of the university. When Uganda became independent in 1962, it continued as an influential centre of applied social research under the directorship of Derek Stenning until his untimely death in 1964.

Not everyone shared Richards's enthusiasm (e.g. Richards 1977b) for the research centres. As early as 1946, she expressed her concern to Raymond Firth about a seeming lack of commitment from anthropologists to the regional research infrastructures. Max Gluckman, she writes, 'wants to get all the research workers over to England with him – to give them what he calls training in Oxford, preferably for a year.' She goes on to suggest that his rationalisation for avoiding 'the trouble of going back to the field' is his view that 'local centres are bad, that short periods of fieldwork are better than long, that there is too much field work being done and not enough theory, and that anyone who works on a government project is betraying their science!'<sup>20</sup> She concludes:

I don't think the Council ought to agree to letting all the research fellows come back for a year to Oxford because Gluckman doesn't want to be in Rhodesia. It seems to me to be a bad precedent, and at present I even think that the Oxford atmosphere of 'down with applied anthropology' and their emphasis on the fact that the climate of Africa is dangerous would not be very good.

She ends by pointing out the significance of this move: 'I think it is important because it will mean, I fear, the abandonment of our whole local centre policy if we give in on this.'

These differences were openly aired in the next meeting of the council, attended by Max Gluckman. In response to the council's view of the importance of the regional institutes, he argued that this depended on the facilities available, and that at the RLI 'there was nothing which could be described as a University atmosphere, and in his opinion the function of a regional institute was to act as an advance base from which to conduct field work rather than as a centre of academic training or excellence'. The chair pointed out that the whole purpose of the scheme was to create 'regional universities comparable in standing to Universities at home', whilst Firth accused him of hoping to draw up a plan of local research by 'remote control'. Whilst arguing for increased funds for the RLI, Gluckman again insisted on the 'intellectual stimulus of the home universities' for writing up.<sup>21</sup>

The argument moved on to the relationship of research institutes to 'government planning in colonial territories and the problem of

applied research to which this gives rise'. Whilst everyone agreed that research institutes should concentrate upon basic research, and 'should not obtrude their advice unasked upon territorial governments', Gluckman disagreed with the council's view 'that if their assistance was sought in connection with particular investigations ... they could contribute much and should be ready to do so'. The issue was left unresolved. Despite the tensions, and the coded reservations expressed by Firth and Richards about Gluckman 'overstretching himself' in the rapid expansion of the RLI, it was agreed to support the RLI plans. No doubt the argument was partly motivated by the growing rivalry between Oxford and LSE, but also by fundamentally different attitudes to the role and future possibilities for anthropology in the colonies. In adopting a more avowedly anti-colonial stance, Gluckman saw little possibility for a higher education institute with the capacity for independent research amidst the tensions of the federation (Colson 1977).

### **The CSSRC and anthropology**

The history of relations between the Colonial Social Science Research Council and individual anthropologists is fascinating. There was a direct tension between a metropolitan academic agenda and the council's concern with colonial 'social problems'. Given that many key disciplinary figures were on one of the CSSRC committees or involved with the regional institutes, the disputes also reveal political disagreements between individuals over the appropriate stance for anthropology to take in relation to colonial affairs.

Within the discipline, there was a growing perception that the CSSRC, given the prominent roles of Firth and Richards, was an LSE affair. A rift developed between LSE and Oxford, partly fostered by Gluckman's scepticism about a research programme too closely directed by the Colonial Office. Gluckman had already been frank in his expression of views in another public forum – the Association of Social Anthropologists. In a written response to a memo from Evans-Pritchard proposing this new association in the spring of 1946, he highlighted the 'grave danger that the demands of colonial governments for research workers may lead to an excessive concentration on practical problems, to the detriment of basic research, and to the lowering of professional standards and status which would lose the gains of the last 20 years'. He already knew of both Evans-Pritchard's long antipathy towards Audrey Richards and his suspicion of applied anthropology, both legacies, Goody suggests, of Evans-Pritchard's earlier animosity towards Malinowski (Goody 1995).



By the late 1940s relationships between Oxford and LSE as the leading anthropology departments of the day became steadily more strained. As well as differing theoretical positions and views on the importance of 'applying' social research, the perceived LSE bias of the CSSRC made many unhappy. The split was also intellectually motivated, by what Richards later remembered as the 'sudden break that we felt after the war when EP and his students were advancing the suggestion that social structures – in his sense – were the only things to be studied' and 'the sense we had of a battle being joined'.<sup>22</sup>

The split was a vituperative one, with Max Gluckman in Oxford writing a stormy letter to Audrey Richards attacking the LSE 'mafia' in late 1946. While he subsequently retracted his outburst, her response is fascinating:

Only Max I do hope this is not going to be a personal quarrel. I disagree with some of the Oxford developments but Firth and I have strenuously stood against the idea that there are two camps. We won't let the students group themselves like this and we lecture on and discuss both Fortes and EP's material. We certainly kept up our personal relations at the ASA in July. So what is all this talk about 'smashing your influence'? For God's sake don't let us become like two sets of psycho-analysts who turn their scientific hypotheses into religious faiths that you must accept or perish and won't associate with unbelievers. We shall certainly hope that you and some of your ex-team will come up to seminars in London, and that any of our East African PhDs will come to Oxford and see you ... Perhaps I write with some tone of injury too. I think it is that both EP and Fortes have decided that Council is dominated entirely by the LSE and that they are shut out from it. They admit that they aren't prepared to go on the council or do the extremely heavy work that we have done these last years. (I reckon about 1/3 of my time goes on it in term time). But I don't think they give credit to the fact that if I hadn't fought in the Colonial Office for so long there wouldn't have been any money for anthropology at all. Hence when you make entirely baseless charges I suppose the WORM begins to turn though disclaiming that it has been prodded at all! Well anyhow, for heavens sake don't let us fight!<sup>23</sup>

The disagreement spilled out in a heated debate in an Association of Social Anthropology (ASA) business meeting in July 1948. Discussed under 'Other Business' a stoutly worded resolution was passed that 'the present organisation for the expenditures of funds from the Colonial Development and Welfare fund on anthropological research is not in the best interests of anthropology and its application to colonial problems'. The minute continued that 'the interests of anthropology should be represented by persons nominated by the Association', and instructing the secretary to write to the Secretary of State to ask him to receive the President of the Association, 'who would put to him the

reasons why the Association had come to these conclusions'.<sup>24</sup> The motion was Oxford-led. When it was put to a vote the LSE contingent – Professor Firth, Dr Read, Dr Kaberry and Dr Mair – all abstained.

The association decided to seek a meeting with the Secretary of State Creech-Jones. It is indicative of the influence of the discipline's leading figures that their concerns were treated with great seriousness by the Colonial Office. A lengthy and uncompromising 'aide-memoire' was sent to the Secretary of State regarding the funding of anthropological research. The ASA document made a series of demands, calling first for 'a consultative panel consisting of the professors of anthropology of Oxford, Cambridge, the LSE and UCL [University College London] of London University, which should be consulted with regard to all projects for anthropological research'. It went on to ask that any 'research worker financed by the committee on social research should be attached to a university department of anthropology during the period of his training and research'. These demands served to consolidate not only the discipline but also its oldest departments. The final point was the most controversial, claiming an anthropological monopoly over methodological competence in colonial social research:<sup>25</sup>

It is said that the majority of the research projects accepted by the committee on social research have in fact been such as can only be effectively carried out by anthropologists. It is desirable that in appointing any person to carry out such projects two things must be taken into consideration:

- a) that the person appointed should, before taking up research, have received a thorough training in general social anthropology
- b) that before being required to devote attention to some particular problem in which knowledge is required for administration purposes, he should be given sufficient time (in most instances a year) to make a general sociological study of the people or area with which he is concerned

In the meeting Radcliffe-Brown, as Honorary President, explained that the ASA's main concern was to have more professional control over funding decisions. The Colonial Office response was surprisingly amenable to several of the ideas, including that of a consultative 'subject' panel. It agreed that its members should be those of the council with a qualification in anthropology, plus those other professors at Oxford, Cambridge, LSE and UCL not presently on the CSSRC. As a result a Social Anthropology and Sociology subcommittee was subsequently set up, with Evans-Pritchard, Hutton and Fortes as additional members. This served as a model for other subject panels, replacing the previous regional committees of the council. Yet

anthropology's attempt to monopolise colonial research did not go unchallenged. The Colonial Office memo ended strongly, saying that it 'cannot accept the suggestion that the majority of the research projects accepted and recommended by the council have in fact been such as can only be effectively carried out by anthropologists', and that the 'final recommendations' would rest with the council, and not the consultative panel!

These new subject panels signalled the increasing power of British anthropology departments and metropolitan disciplinary agendas over the 'colonial social problem' focus of the council. The huge increase in post-war funding for British higher education assured anthropology the institutional security and confidence of an academic identity, even if Colonial Office patronage and the training offered by the regional institutes such as the RLI remained important for the reproduction of the discipline.

By the end of the 1940s, a huge volume of social research had been commissioned by the CSSRC, much of which was published by the government in its extensive Colonial Research Series. Ethnographic work in Africa included research on land tenure in Nigeria by Charles Meek (1957), in Zanzibar by John Middleton (1961) and in Basutoland by Vernon Sheddick (1954); work on native administration in Northern Rhodesia by Bill Epstein (1953) and Nyasaland by Lucy Mair (1952); and on the social organisation of the Nandi by George Huntingford (1950), the Hausa by M.G. Smith (1955), the Acholi by Frank Girling (1960) and the Tiv by Paul Bohannon (1954). Many of these studies were theoretically oriented, with little direct policy relevance. Inevitably many of these studies were holistic accounts of single ethnic groups. Where survey work was conducted, it was usually at the household or local level, for few of the anthropologists were equipped to carry out the territory-wide quantitative surveys that might have been more necessary for national planning purposes. Information coverage was selective and partial, and hardly served the comprehensive and strategic welfare and developmental blueprint originally envisaged by some in the Colonial Office.

In the 1950s the work of the council gradually changed, particularly as colonial governments were increasingly encouraged to organise their own research into local 'problems'. CSSRC funding concentrated on the institutes' own research programmes, and few individual grants were awarded. Yet conflicting interpretations of the council's remit continued. The new Anthropology and Sociology subcommittee began to meet in 1949, mostly to discuss applications for research fellowships. The initial chair was the historian Godfrey Thomson, but on his resignation in 1950 Evans-Pritchard became chairman. Audrey Richards, who was by this time running the East

African Institute for Social Research (EAISR) at Makerere, confided her fears about this with Sally Chilver, the CSSRC secretary of the time, writing, 'I am depressed because he is dead set against local institutes and has made no secret of that. He will vote and finally win his way of getting large grants to English universities, no questions asked and no results expected and those of us who have tried to play the Colonial Office fair will feel HAD.'<sup>26</sup>

Quite apart from the institutional rivalry and Audrey Richards's sense that 'the ordinary rules of fair play don't work with him', her main concern was with Evans-Pritchard's dislike of the whole principle of the devolution of research agendas to the regional institutes like the RLI and the EAISR. Evans-Pritchard's view, echoed by Gluckman, that researchers should return to their 'home' universities in the UK for a six month break during fieldwork, negated one of the rationales for the institutes, as envisioned by Richards. By then, the RLI's work was increasingly academic in nature, partly reflecting Gluckman's new self-identity as an anthropological theorist (Gluckman 1948, Colson 1977).

The argument revealed not only methodological disagreements, but fundamental political conflicts over disciplinary priorities and what 'professionalisation' entailed. The very consolidation of the discipline in UK universities depended on a new generation of scholars receiving CSSRC funding for training and fieldwork, but then taking up UK academic posts.

Subsequent letters between Richards and Chilver highlighted continuing tensions in the council over the huge cost of funding the regional research institutes, especially as the West African Institute became caught up in regional politics and infighting. In a report from the Anthropology and Sociology subcommittee he chaired, Evans-Pritchard strongly recommended that any savings available should be devoted to 'independent schemes of research', in areas outside those covered by the institutes' activities or the 'special interests' they had developed.<sup>27</sup> Even the chair, the LSE director Carr-Saunders, began to turn against the idea of such institutes, and the view developed that these should be more closely integrated within the new universities. Richards, however, felt that EAISR could train students far more cheaply than otherwise, and that 'all the preliminary negotiations and muddles with governments which most other academic research workers have are avoided because we now have good relations with all three Governments'. In her letters she reflected acutely and wittily on council micro-politics and the likely sources of opposition, writing to Sally Chilver to proclaim: 'I have already told Perham that it is cheaper to finance an Institute than a Scarborough student [a new programme of Government-funded studentships], and I hope she is smoking that

in her pipe.' Richards had influential connections within the Colonial office, and she continued to win many of her battles. Despite the rivalry between them, both Margery Perham and Audrey Richards remained major public influences and scholarly advocates for colonial reform (see Perham 1962; Smith and Bull 1992; Kuper 1996b).

## Conclusion

What were the long-term consequences of this colonial patronage for social anthropology and the other social sciences? De L'Estoile argues that the impact of what he calls a new 'field of competence' was transformative: 'This new academic discipline emerged as the result of a process of construction of a specific field of competence in the knowledge of those social phenomena that characterise "backward" societies, and the monopolisation of that competence by a group of professional scholars, at the expense of those whose claim to competence had formerly been recognised: the "practical men".' (de L'Estoile 1997, 373). Richards is equally emphatic, arguing that 'the suddenness with which considerable funds became available had ... dramatic effects which would not have been achieved by a series of small grants' (Richards 1977a, 186), evidenced by the huge volume of research produced (Jeffries 1964).

Anthropology's status within universities was immeasurably bolstered by the volume of research funding received from the CSSRC. By 1953 there were thirty-eight teaching positions in social anthropology in the UK, an impressive rate of expansion. Some of this occurred through the UGC funding for new departments at SOAS, Manchester and Edinburgh, but much also relied on Colonial Office funding of doctoral and postdoctoral research. More than fifty anthropologists benefited in some way from Colonial Office-funded research grants, studentships or its funding for the regional institutes (Richards 1955). As the Ardeners note, 'the "professionalisation" of the discipline for which the pre-war generation worked was overwhelmingly realised in the post-war "bulge"' (Ardenner and Ardenner 1965, 303). Important as university posts were, the reproduction and expansion of the discipline depended primarily on finding research funding for students.

In 1977 the LSE held a series of seminars revisiting the colonial experiences of British anthropologists. Richards, Firth and Chilver all presented papers (Chilver 1977; Firth 1977; Richards 1977a). They found themselves swimming against a dominant post-Vietnam perspective that, through a strong and overly simplistic reading of influential texts such as *Anthropology and Colonialism* (Asad 1973,

including Feuchtwang's (1973) valuable account of the CSSRC; see also Owusu 1975), viewed this earlier generation as having been 'handmaidens' of colonial states. Such a gendered caricature was, and remains, somewhat unjust. Whilst this was an important moment of critique and self-reflection, it collapsed very different historical moments and geographical concerns. It also did not capture the diverse involvement and contradictory political agendas described in this chapter – amongst anthropologists, those in the Colonial Office and within the colonies themselves.

The critics tended to underplay the major historical changes occurring at the end of the colonial period. As Richards notes, 'before the Second World War ... the colonial office ... gave no financial support to anthropological or any other kind of social science research and might almost be said to be famous for not doing so' (Richards 1977, 169). The focus of critiques, as Pels and Salemink note (1999), is on 'the colonial complicity of *academic* anthropologists' at a time when the 'academy' was not the only anthropological habitat. Even after the war, anthropologists like Gluckman and Evans-Pritchard were ambiguous and tactical in their relationships with colonial authorities. Some, like Richards and Firth, negotiated a multiplicity of roles.

At a general level Stocking is right in accepting that 'colonialism was a critically important context for the development of anthropology' (Stocking 1996, 368). Yet this is the start, rather than the end, of any explanation. As he notes, 'important groups within the world of colonial administration had shown themselves willing to accept the scientific status and the utilitarian promissory note of social anthropology' (ibid., 420). When it suited them, the various protagonists played down this utility, in favour of fundamental research. Anthropologists were not alone in this regard, and the CSSRC also played up this rhetorical opposition when it suited them. At one moment Richards describes the CSSRC as 'do-gooders trying to organise research which would increase the knowledge we felt to be helpful for "welfare and development"'. At the next she downplays the administrative appropriation of anthropological ideas, noting how young anthropologists involved in detailed studies 'were learning their jobs ... and had not the competence to pronounce on the problems of the colony as a whole' (Richards 1977a, 178).

Anthropology's pre-eminence within the CSSRC thus relied partly on its ability to reformulate 'social problems' as scientific ones. Its intellectual prestige depended primarily on the symbolic and financial support from the council, and its willingness to accept the discipline's research agendas and train its fieldworkers. Kuper's view that the 'winding up of the CSSRC did not have much impact' on anthropology

(Kuper 1996a, 117) does not fully capture the importance of this symbiosis. The end of empire was also the end of a complex set of political relations linking scholarly practice with the production of knowledge. It created a lacuna that was filled by a new cadre of 'development' experts, relatively few of whom had a background in anthropology. By working so successfully within the ambit of the CSSRC, anthropologists had developed a monopoly over a field of practice that suddenly disappeared. The discipline was never to be so confident again.

### Notes

1. Perham papers, Rhodes House, File 685/2.
2. Brit Emp MSS 342, Rhodes House, MacDonald to Hailey, 18.3.40.
3. Brit Emp MSS 342, MacDonald to Hailey 18.4.40.
4. Brit Emp MSS 342, Hailey to MacDonald, 3.5.40.
5. First Annual Report of the Colonial Research Committee, 1943–44, Cmnd. 6535.
6. Perham papers, file 685/9, Rhodes House.
7. Firth papers, LSE, file 2/2.
8. CSSRC 1944 files, LSE.
9. First annual report of the CSSRC, p27.
10. CSSRC (44) 24, LSE.
11. CSSRC minutes of the 8th meeting, 1944, LSE.
12. CSSRC fourth annual report, LSE.
13. Interview, 6.3.00.
14. Colonial Research Council, first meeting of council, 1948, minute 2, LSE.
15. Colonial Research Council Progress Report 1942–43, LSE.
16. Asquith Commission, Cmnd. 6647, p17.
17. CSSRC, minutes of the 11th meeting, July 1945.
18. PRO 927/2/1 – CRC paper 1943 (57).
19. Mitchell papers, Rhodes House MSS 5/1 27 from Gluckman 1.7.48.
20. Firth papers, 2/3 Letter from Audrey Richards to Raymond Firth, 17.8.46.
21. CSSRC minutes of the 20th meeting re CSSRC (46) 27, LSE.
22. Firth papers, letter from AIR to RF, 8.3.76.
23. Richards papers, 16/19, LSE, letter from AIR to Max Gluckman, 4.11.48.
24. ASA papers, LSE A1/1.
25. CSSRC papers CSSRC (48) 62.
26. Richards papers, 16/7, LSE, letter from AIR to Sally Chilver, 14.11.50
27. CSSRC minutes of the 62nd meeting, autumn 1952.