

INTRODUCTION



Social anthropology achieved recognition as a standalone academic discipline in Great Britain and its Empire in the 1920s. It emerged out of anthropology, which had for long been seen primarily as a branch of natural history, with some input from classical and biblical studies. Leading figures in the development of anthropology included T.H. Huxley (1825–95), the evolutionary biologist, Sir Edward Tylor (1832–1917), a cultural evolutionist, William Robertson Smith (1846–94), a theologian and biblical scholar, and Sir James Frazer (1854–1941), the author of *The Golden Bough*, a classical scholar who coined the title ‘social anthropology’ in 1906 to describe ‘a branch of sociology that deals with primitive peoples’ (Kuper 2015, quoting A.R. Radcliffe-Brown). Social anthropology had to be distinguished from physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, ethnology, ethnography and sociology, though social anthropologists continued (and continue) to describe themselves, on occasion, as sociologists or ethnographers.

The two major figures in the emergence of social anthropology as a separate discipline were A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955), a pupil at Cambridge of W.H.R. Rivers (1864–1922), a psychologist, and of A.C. Haddon (1855–1940), a zoologist turned ethnologist; and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942), a Polish scholar who had studied mathematics and physics in Cracow, now in Poland, then in Austro-Hungary, as well as economics with Karl Bücher (1847–1930) and psychology with Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) at Leipzig in Germany. He moved to the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1910 to study with C.G. Seligman

Max Gluckman

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(1873–1940), a pathologist turned ethnologist. Radcliffe-Brown did fieldwork on the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean and was appointed to the chair of social anthropology, the first such chair in the British Empire, at the newly established University of Cape Town in South Africa in 1921. He remained there until 1925, when he moved to the University of Sydney in Australia. After six years from 1931 at the University of Chicago, he became the first Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford in 1937. Malinowski did fieldwork on the Trobriand Islands, north of Australia, during the First World War. His was allowed to stay there for most of the war as an alternative to internment in Australia as a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and an enemy alien. He was appointed as a lecturer in social anthropology at the LSE in 1921. Regarded as the leading exponent of intensive ‘fieldwork’ and the convener of a famous seminar, he became a professor there in 1924, and moved to Yale University in the United States in 1939. Both Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski were seen as exponents of ‘functionalism’, while Radcliffe-Brown created ‘structural functionalism’. They were both interested in the functioning of social systems in the present and they were dismissive of the usefulness of history in the study of what they would both have described as ‘primitive’ peoples. They had a major influence on social anthropology as it was practised in Africa from the 1920s until decolonization in the 1960s.

Max Gluckman was the most influential of a group of social anthropologists, including Isaac Schapera (1905–2003), Monica Hunter (Wilson) (1908–82), Hilda Beemer (Kuper) (1911–92), Meyer Fortes (1906–83), Ellen Kaumheimer (Hellman and later Koch) (1908–82), Eileen Jensen (Krige) (1904–95) and Jack Krige (1896–1959), who emerged from South Africa during the 1930s into what was essentially a new academic discipline. Gluckman is best known today for his work on the ethnography and history of the Zulu of South Africa, and on the legal system of the Lozi of Northern Rhodesia/Zambia. His best-known work on the Zulu is his three-part ‘Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand’ (1940–2). In the context of the history of social anthropology, this was revolutionary in its focus on a single social situation or

event (actually several events) occurring at a named place on a specific date with identified actors. His description and analysis of events in real time implied a rejection of contemporary social anthropological practice, of the 'ethnographic present' and of hypothetical or conjectural reconstructions, and an acceptance of the need to study 'primitive' societies in the context of the modern world. The underlying themes of conflict and cohesion remained central to much of his work. Asked to write an article on the Zulu for Edward Evans-Pritchard's (1902–73) and Meyer Fortes's *African Political Systems* (1940), he had become intrigued by the question of how such an intensely divided society as South Africa continued to function. He found his answer in what he later called 'the bonds in the colour bar'.

Gluckman's two monographs on Lozi customary law, *The Judicial Process among the Barotse* (1955) and *The Ideas in Barotse Jurisprudence* (1965), have remained highly influential. They sparked interest in the comparative study of legal systems and influenced the development of alternative methods of arbitration and dispute resolution in the United States, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Gluckman became a public intellectual in the United Kingdom where he was a regular broadcaster on the BBC's Third Programme. He communicated some of his ideas on African society, and those of several of his contemporaries, to a wide audience through a series of broadcast talks, which were collected and published in *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (1956).

Gluckman was a member of the staff of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI) at Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia/Zambia from 1939 to 1947, and was its acting director or substantive director from 1941 to 1947. He was Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester from 1949 to 1971, and head of the Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology from 1949 to 1965. He provided a personal and continuing link between these two institutions, at least until 1955, and his 'Analysis' became the foundation text of what was named by others as the 'Manchester School', an informal grouping of social anthropologists, mainly working on Africa, which emerged in the 1950s under his leadership.