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SOUTH AFRICAN ANTHROPOLOGY
An Inside Job*

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I.

The historical relationship between social anthropology and African imperial or colonial policy is still poorly understood, but it should be evident that the relationship was neither stable nor uniform, even if too little attention has so far been paid to periodisation, and to local or regional differences. But perhaps less obvious is the fact that the traffic between colony and metropolis was by no means one way. Not only were funds, jobs, even careers sometimes on offer to metropolitan anthropologists from colonial or dominion governments: there was also a two-way traffic in ideas. Indeed, it could be argued that the institutional and intellectual origins of British social anthropology should be traced to Australia and South Africa. This is a central thesis of the present case study, which is a reflection on the course of anthropology in South Africa.[1]

As late as 1920, social anthropology had barely established a foothold in British universities, and it had only fugitive and peripheral connections with African colonial governments. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown[2], the first British student to have specialised in anthropology as an undergraduate, was the coming man in the field, but in 1920, almost forty years old, he was unemployed, recovering from ill-health, and obliged to live with his brother in Johannesburg. He wrote a letter to his former teacher and patron, Alfred Cort Haddon, to give some idea of his job prospects in South Africa, and to solicit assistance. In the past few years he had worked in secondary education, in Australia and in Tonga, and he was doing some teaching at the Normal College in

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1 Recently there has been a flow – almost a flood – of contributions to the history of South African anthropology, and more are in the works. Several specialised studies will be cited in the text. For overviews see: Hammond-Tooke (1977), Dubow (1989), Gordon (1990), Schmidt (1996), and Stocking (1995:323–338). An important doctoral thesis is being completed by Paul Cocks. A review of contemporary developments may be found in Gordon and Spiegel (1993).

2 In the early 1920s he was beginning to use the form A. Radcliffe Brown in preference to A.R. Brown. In a postscript to a letter to Haddon, he reported: "As there are so many Browns in the world (there is an A. Brown at the University here) I have been obliged to find some way of distinguishing myself and have taken the name of Radcliffe Brown" (Radcliffe-Brown 1921a). The hyphen came soon after.

3 See Schapera (1934a). Cf. Hammond-Tooke (1997:20–21).

Johannesburg, but, he wrote, "of course I should prefer to stick to ethnology". A position as ethnologist at the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria was one possibility. He had also picked up a tantalising rumour that the Union government might be prepared to establish an ethnographic research unit.

> The man who can do this is Smuts. If you know of any means of approaching Smuts and putting the matter before him I think it would be well worth doing and would probably be successful [...] I hope to meet Smuts, but of course I cannot well urge the needs of ethnology for it will be obvious that I am hunting for a job. So I hope that you will be able to do something (Radcliffe-Brown 1920).

J.C. Smuts was at that time Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, but he had been a student at Cambridge, and was an honorary fellow of Christ's College, to which Haddon belonged. Haddon had himself urged the establishment of a research bureau in ethnology during a visit to South Africa in 1905, and in response to Radcliffe-Brown's prodding he immediately wrote a letter to Smuts, urging two main reasons for the project: "(1) the advancement of scientific knowledge, and (2) the advantage which would accrue to the Government for the purpose of administration in having authoritative information concerning the sociology, manners and customs, and religion of the various tribes". He went on to remark that

> It so happens that Mr A.R. Brown is at the present time in Johannesburg [...] Thus you have on the spot the most brilliant and experienced of the younger students turned out by the Cambridge School of Ethnology, and I am sure that you could not get a more competent investigator from elsewhere (Haddon 1920).

Smuts passed Haddon's letter on to the Minister of Native Affairs, who forwarded it to the liberal parliamentarian John X. Merriman, with the remark that it "arrives at an opportune time". Several South African scholars were also busily lobbying for a school of African studies[3], but Haddon's initiative coincided fortuitously with the first major parliamentary crisis on the question of what was termed 'native policy'. In the aftermath of World War I, African politics became more radical, and white politicians began to debate native policy with new urgency. In 1920, the Smuts government enacted the Native Affairs Act, which set up native councils in the reserves with local government powers, and established mechanisms for consultation between white and black leaders. The legislation precipitated a confrontation between segregationists and more liberal politicians (or, in the view of some historians, between more and less extreme segregationists).

Precisely what weight Haddon's intervention may have carried in this complex situation is uncertain, but in any case the authorities decided to fund a School of African Life and Languages, and to establish it at the University of Cape Town. A pro-

[3] See Schapera (1934a). Cf. Hammond-Tooke (1997:20–21).

fessor of African languages was appointed in 1920. In the following year the University advertised a chair in social anthropology, the first established chair in the subject in Britain or in the British Empire.

But what sort of scholar should be appointed to this novel position? The South Africans who lobbied for anthropology – some administrators and politicians, and missionaries – expected, naturally enough, that an authority on South African ethnology would be appointed. However, the university followed the advice of an English advisory committee – in which Haddon participated, together with Frazer, Marett and Rivers – who took it for granted that what was needed was a theoretically trained anthropologist. They recommended Radcliffe-Brown, on the grounds of his scientific standing. The fact that his field experience was entirely in the Andaman Islands and in Australia was a secondary matter. Radcliffe-Brown was duly appointed, though it was made clear that long-term funding could not be counted upon.[4]

Radcliffe-Brown's science was, however, very different from that of the established British anthropologists who recommended him for the Cape Town chair. Influenced by Durkheim, he had broken with the evolutionism of Frazer and the diffusionism of Rivers. He advocated a science that would be based on "general laws of sociology and psychology", and he claimed that such a scientific anthropology would be more likely "to lead to results of practical value to South Africa" than historical, ethnological studies (Radcliffe-Brown 1922:40). In his inaugural lecture, in 1921, the new professor summarised in lay terms the principles of his science. The subject of social anthropology was social structure, and social structures were integrated systems. Any change, in any part, would have repercussions for the rest of the system. He remarked that great changes had been in train for generations in South Africa. The traditional social systems of the African people had been transformed by European interventions: "we inaugurated something that must change the whole of their social life". From the principles of structural-functionalism an ineluctable conclusion followed: "Segregation was impossible". Radcliffe-Brown also advised legislators to take note of the fact that the various communities might apply different moral principles to evaluate laws. Finally, he remarked that it was necessary to consider what future "white civilization" might have in South Africa, since the institutions of the whites would also, inevitably, be subject to change in the emergent social system (Radcliffe-Brown 1921b). Radcliffe-Brown regularly insisted that the social anthropologist should provide facts and scientific appreciations, rather than political opinions, but he could have had no illusions about the political sensitivity of his analysis. It is hardly surprising that only a couple of months after taking up the post, the new professor was complaining to Haddon:

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4 See Schapera (1990). Marett refused to join the others in recommending Radcliffe-Brown without qualification, preferring the Oxford candidate, F.E. Williams, and remarking that Brown "seemed rather conceited and unsociable when I knew him slightly some years ago" (Schapera 1990:7).

> It is a detestable nuisance having this work mixed up with the kind of politics that we have out here. Beattie [the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town] tells me that there was much opposition amongst Smuts's followers to making the grant. They were prepared to withdraw their opposition if a member of the Dutch Reformed Church (!) was appointed to one of the professorships [...] So Smuts anticipates very violent opposition to the renewal of the grant in 3 year's time (Radcliffe-Brown 1921a).

Radcliffe-Brown also turned his guns on the established, evolutionist anthropology of the leading Southern African specialists, notably Henri Junod. Indeed, his famous lecture counterposing the sociology of the present, the study of social structure, to the speculative history of the evolutionists and diffusionists was delivered and published in South Africa (Radcliffe-Brown 1923). He was, in short, determined to stir things up, but for the same reasons he also found allies, among them perhaps the leading African intellectual of the day, Professor D.D.T. Jabavu, who was a Professor at Fort Hare Native College. Jabavu attended some of Radcliffe-Brown's vacation schools (run for missionaries and civil servants) and wrote lyrically about his inspiring lectures and his "unbiased racial outlook"; and he endorsed Radcliffe-Brown's call for "research on Bantu Social Anthropology" (Jabavu 1924). Jabavu was later to offer courses in anthropology at Fort Hare (where one of his students was the young Nelson Mandela).[5]

In 1926, Radcliffe-Brown departed for Sydney, urging in a final public lecture that "South African nationalism must be a nationalism composed of both black and white" (Stocking 1995:327). Despite the opposition Radcliffe-Brown had aroused in some quarters, the chair itself was maintained. His successor was T.T. Barnard, another Cambridge student of Haddon and Rivers. He lost interest in anthropology and turned to horticulture, and in 1935 gracefully passed the chair to Isaac Schapera, on the grounds that Schapera was the best man for the position. Before Radcliffe-Brown's departure, teaching in social anthropology had also been established in three other universities (the University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, and the Afrikaans-medium Universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria). In 1925 an ethnological section was established in the government's Native Affairs Department, under G.P. Lestrade. A small official fund was also established for academic research (smaller, it was noted, than the fund for prehistory, which interested Smuts rather more). However, government support was peripheral, and it ended when a new, right-wing government came to power just as the Depression was at its height.

This is not surprising, for the government had made little use of anthropology. In 1927 the Native Administration Act extended the application of so-called traditional law, and the jurisdiction of chiefs' courts, but the South African anthropologists were not called upon to participate in this initiative. (In contrast, the Bechuanaland Government commissioned a review of customary law from Schapera.) As late as 1934, at a time when Lugard's policy of Indirect Rule was beginning to direct the attention of

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5 Mandela wrote about Jabavu with some awe (1994:52–53).

colonial administrators to modern anthropological ideas, Schapera noted that South Africa was the only country in Africa that did not require its native administrators to receive any professional training, and that policy makers did not call on anthropological expertise (Schapera 1934a:227–228).

In 1929 the race question dominated what came to be called the 'black peril' elections, and an Afrikaner nationalist government came to power. It was sympathetic to the European fascist movements of the 1930s, but the South African situation had its own very particular characteristics. The crucial issue for white South African politicians was the so-called 'Poor White Problem', the development of a growing population of unemployed, largely Afrikaans-speaking whites. The Afrikaner nationalists blamed their plight on 'English' capitalists, who were prepared to sacrifice the interests of white workers for the sake of cheaper black labour. This economic analysis was subsumed within an ethnic politics. The Afrikaner nation, defeated on the battlefield a generation earlier, was now oppressed economically by its old enemies. Moreover, poor whites might be assimilated into the black proletariat. Miscegenation would lead to the end of racial identity. The solution was an Afrikaner cultural revival, ethnic mobilisation in politics, job reservation for whites, and racial segregation. A national debate was launched on the future of South Africa, and on the place of the African population within it.

Two broad and fiercely opposed discourses on the race question were already established. One drew on the notion that civilization and Christianity would transform the African societies, and that a liberal policy of individual rights would ultimately prevail. The educated Africans "are ranged on the side of civilization", Jabavu assured a parliamentary select committee in 1927.

> Our interests are intertwined with civilized interests. We would not like to go back naked to the Kraals and live a barbarous life. We have renounced that life once and for all. In fact, if today there were a war between barbarism and civilization, we would be on the side of civilization (Dubow 1989:36).

Some argued that the industrialisation of South Africa would lead ineluctably to the modernisation of all sectors of the society, and to a liberal political settlement. The most radical version of this theory was advanced by the historian W.M. Macmillan, and was memorably summed up by his student C.W. de Kiewiet, who noted that the 1936 census found that there were over half a million more natives outside the reserves than within them, and concluded:

> Segregation is a myth, a fancy, anything but a fact. As a word it describes a hope or a policy but not a real situation [...] What has been twisted together by history cannot be readily disentangled by laws. To unwind the woven cord of native and European life is simply to require history to retrace its steps (De Kiewiet 1941:242).

The alternative view opposed culture to civilization, insisting, in the tradition of German romanticism, that interests were shaped by primordial cultural identities, and that if the integrity of a culture was undermined then social disintegration would follow. The main point of reference for this theory was, of course, the Afrikaner nation itself: and this was the period in which modern Afrikaner nationalism was taking shape. However, it could also be applied to the African population. This was the standpoint of leading Afrikaner ethnologists, who had typically taken their advanced degrees in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, and who now supported segregation. W.W.M. Eiselen, the professor of ethnology at Stellenbosch, argued that policy should aim to foster "higher Bantu culture and not at producing black Europeans" (Gordon 1988:540). Giving evidence to the new government's Native Economic Commission, in 1931, Gérard Lestrade, Professor of Ethnology at the University of Pretoria, presented a "scientific" case against assimilation and in favour of a segregationist, or what he termed an "adaptationist" approach, that "would take out of the Bantu past what was good, and even what was merely neutral, and together with what is good of European culture for the Bantu, build up a Bantu future" (Dubow 1989:36). Lestrade's intervention provoked W.M. Macmillan to issue a root-and-branch denunciation of anthropologists as "paralysed conservatives" (H. Macmillan 1989), but in fact the small community of anthropologists were divided.

The underlying assumptions of the segregationist ideology were opposed by Agnes Winifred Hoernlé, a close associate of Radcliffe-Brown[6], who taught at the University of the Witwatersrand, and by Isaac Schapera at Cape Town. Winifred Hoernlé was one of the founders of a liberal think-tank, the South African Institute of Race Relations, in 1929. She also supervised the first ethnographic studies of African urban slums, studies that must be seen not only as examples of a classic reformist genre of 'social problems', or even as adaptations of the urban studies of the Chicago school, but perhaps above all as attempts to direct attention to the life of the so-called 'detribalised natives', the bane of the segregationists.[7]

Schapera published an edited book in 1934, entitled "Western Civilization and the Natives of South Africa" (1934b), which took for its subject the rapidly changing situation of black South Africans. In his preface, Schapera directly confronted the segregationist arguments of the Native Economic Commission, pointing out that there was no longer in South Africa the social basis for a policy of indirect rule. Moreover, and in contrast to every other contemporary academic symposium on Africa, he included a chapter by an African intellectual, written by D.D.T. Jabavu, and simply entitled "Bantu Grievances". Jabavu concentrated on land issues and the oppressive

6 For a useful intellectual biography see Peter Carstens' "Introduction" to Winifred Hoernlé (1985).

7 Hoernlé's student, Ellen Hellmann, undertook the first study of an African slum, in 1934, and she was soon followed by two other Hoernlé students, E.J. Krige and Hilda Beemer (Kuper). See Hellmann (1948), Krige (1936), and Kuper and Kaplan (1944).

regulation of labour, but also covered a variety of topics from the "travesty of justice", to the franchise.

A later volume, "The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa", also edited by Schapera (1937), included a chapter on "The Imposition and Nature of European Control", by the liberal historian J.S. Marais, who concluded that

> the position of Natives throughout the country has become worse since 1910. Rights they formerly enjoyed have been abolished or have become precarious; the principle of anti-native discrimination has been extended into a number of new fields, and new ways of enforcing it have been devised (Schapera 1937:355).

Schapera's own chapter on "Cultural Changes in Tribal Life" concluded with the observation that despite legislation promoting segregation, "the Bantu are being drawn more and more into the common cultural life of South Africa" (1937:387), a conclusion, he noted, that was reinforced by the evidence presented in the chapters that followed, on Africans on the farms (by Monica Hunter) and in the towns (by Ellen Hellmann).

The Hertzog government suspended support for Africanist research in South Africa, in 1931, and an Inter-University Committee for African Studies was established. It was affiliated to the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, so becoming eligible for the funds that the Rockefeller Foundation was making available, via the Institute, for ethnographic research. Among the beneficiaries were Monica Hunter, Eileen and Jack Krige, Hilda Kuper, and Z.K. Matthews, a black scholar from Fort Hare, who participated in Malinowski's seminar and undertook research on a characteristic 'social change' theme: "The impact of Western Civilization on the Family Life of the Bantu of South Africa". Funding dried up again when World War II broke out, and the Inter-University Committee suspended its operations. At the same time, the Union Government closed the native reserves to anthropologists. Yet in this brief period in the late 1920s and 1930s, the classic ethnographic field studies of South Africa were undertaken, resulting in a magisterial series of publications including Schapera's books and articles on the Tswana, Monica Hunter's "Reaction to Conquest" (note the title), on the Pondo, and the works of the students directly influenced by Winifred Hoernlé, Hilda Kuper's monographs on the Swazi, J.D. and Eileen Krige on the Lovedu, and Max Gluckman's essays on the Zulu.

In South Africa, as in Europe, the 1930s was a politically charged decade. Jabavu, the first African intellectual to welcome the new anthropology to South Africa, became founding president of the All-African Convention, in 1936, set up to oppose the abolition of non-white voting rights in the Cape. In 1938, Winifred Hoernlé resigned from the University of the Witwatersrand to devote herself to activist work in race relations. The younger generation of students were steeped in politics. Max Gluckman and Hilda Kuper were close to the Communist Party at this time, but as Gluckman recalled, whether they considered themselves socialists or anti-segregationist liberals, the

whole cohort of students to which he belonged: "either before or after they did field research, believed in the integration of Africans and Whites – and other ethnic groups – within a single social system based on equality of all men". Their work, he went on, put little emphasis on the supposed inner harmony of societies, "and certainly very little on the uniqueness" of the cultures they studied (Gluckman 1975:22).[8]

II.

It was also in the 1930s that Malinowski began to influence the development of South African anthropology, and to be influenced in turn by its particular concerns.

Following in the footsteps of Schapera, the new generation of anthropologists at South Africa's English-speaking universities spent periods with Malinowski at the London School of Economics. In the 1930s, Malinowski's interests were shifting, partly in response to a flow of funds for African research from the Rockefeller Foundation. He also began to attract black African intellectuals to his seminars, including Jomo Kenyatta and the South African Z.K. Matthews. "As an African", Matthews recalled, "I found it a great relief to come across a student of primitive cultures who did not have a purely antiquarian and static interest in them, but stressed the necessity of following each item of culture in its proper context" (Matthews 1981:103–104). The concerns of his Africanist students – and in particular the South Africans – were soon reflected in Malinowski's own publications, particularly after his first, and only, journey to Africa, in 1934.

After brief visits to Lucy Mair and Audrey Richards in the field, in Uganda and Northern Rhodesia, Malinowski went on to South Africa, as a guest speaker at a conference on African education. Here he met the Swazi king, Sobhuza, who had already made contact with the liberal South African anthropologists. There was a specific issue at stake, which had brought the Swazi king to this conference. Sobhuza wished to revive the Swazi initiation ceremonies and to induct a new regiment, arguing that this would provide young Swazi with discipline, and foster respect for elders. His proposal was strongly opposed by the missionaries, and also by some educated, Christian Swazi, though it had support from within the Swaziland administration. Hoernlé and Schapera, however, had visited Swaziland earlier in 1934 and strongly recommended that the *ibutho* (regimental) system should be revived.

A young South African student of Malinowski's, Hilda Beemer (Kuper), was beginning her fieldwork in Swaziland, and Malinowski spent a fortnight with her at the Swazi court, and had several meetings with Sobhuza.[9] Sobhuza and Malinowski estab-

8 Gluckman gave a more detailed account of his own motivation in another essay (1969). Cf. H. Macmillan (1995).

9 See H. Kuper (1978:3–10).

lished a political alliance that survived for several years, and Malinowski submitted a report to the Swaziland Administration endorsing Hoernlé and Schapera's support for the revival of the regimental system. The two men found common ground in their view of the importance of ethnic cultural reassertion in a colonial context. They were both hostile to assimilation, and anti-colonial. Malinowski was sympathetic to "a sophisticated nationalism or tribalism" that "can still draw full strength from the enormous residues of old tradition" which remain alive "not only in the tribal areas but also among the partly detribalized communities" (Malinowski 1945:158), and in Sobhuza he recognised a leader who was putting up an admirable struggle against Westernisation. (One might suggest that Malinowski saw a kinship between this form of nationalism and the nationalism of minorities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[10]) Sobhuza himself expected the liberal anthropologists to support his chosen course. In her "Introduction" to "An African Aristocracy", Hilda Kuper noted:

> Most educated Africans, more particularly detribalized Africans and men with little standing in tribal life, distrust anthropology. They see it as a weapon to keep natives in their 'traditional milieu' (arbitrarily stripped of action judged 'barbarous' by Europeans) and to prevent them on pseudo-scientific grounds – retaining the 'soul of the people', their 'primitive mentality' – from assimilating European culture. Sohbuza, on the other hand, is interested in anthropology; he has read a number of books on the subject, subscribes to anthropological journals, enjoys descriptions of the customs of other people, and is proud of his own. He one day explained, "Anthropology makes possible comparison and selection of lines of further development. European culture is not all good; our is often better. We must be able to choose how to live, and for that we must see how others live. I do not want my people to be imitation Europeans, but to be respected for their own laws and customs" (H. Kuper 1947:1).[11]

Malinowski's reading of African development was, however, by no means accepted by all his students. This became evident with the publication in 1938 of a series of essays, entitled "Methods of Study of Culture Contact in Africa" – the first theoretical symposium in British social anthropology devoted to social change.[12] In his introduction, Malinowski insisted that it was impossible to recover the pre-contact "baseline" African cultures. The investigator was faced rather with a process, in which three foci could be identified: a complex of traditional institutions, beliefs and practices, that were, however, probably far removed from the pre-conquest institutions; the powerful

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10 Ernest Gellner has emphasized the influence on Malinowski of the multi-national model of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and his sympathy for it (Gellner 1987).

11 For the conflicting views held by traditional and modernising African élites about anthropology, see Benoit de L'Estoile (1997).

12 Originally published as a series of papers in the journal *Africa*, this appeared in 1938 with an introduction by Malinowski, as a memorandum (no. XV) of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, London, under the title "Methods of Study of Culture Contact in Africa" (Malinowski 1938).

overlay of white power, economic enterprises, and Christianity; and an emerging third force, a new, synthetic, urban culture, which was not an amalgam of the traditional and the western but a genuinely independent development.[13] Classical functionalism was inappropriate in such a context, Malinowski concluded. What was required was a renewed functionalism, that took for its subject the effect that changes in religion, or land rights, or employment had on other practices.

But although Malinowski's perspective was more dynamic, more celebratory of hybridisation than the contemporary American work of Herskovits[14], the South African participants in the symposium – Hunter, Fortes, and especially Schapera – preferred to represent the South African situation in more sociological terms. Even a remote rural community in Bechuanaland was integrated in a wider social field, Schapera insisted:

> The missionary, administrator, trader and labour recruiter must be regarded as factors in the tribal life in the same way as are the chief and the magician. Christianity [...] must be studied like any other form of cult [...]. So, too, the trading store, the labour recruiter and the agricultural demonstrator must be considered integral parts of the modern economic life, the school as part of the routine educational development of the children, and the [Colonial] Administration as part of the existing political system (Schapera 1938:27).

In his Presidential Address to the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1940, Radcliffe-Brown dismissed Malinowski's suggestion that a "plural society" should be studied as an arena in which two or more "cultures" interacted. European settlers and administrators impelled willy-nilly the development of a new kind of society.

> For what is happening in South Africa, for example, is not the interaction of British culture, and Afrikander (or Boer) culture, Hottentot culture, various Bantu cultures and Indian culture, but the interaction of individuals and groups within an established social structure which is itself in process of change. What is happening in a Transkeian tribe, for example, can only be described by recognising that the tribe has been incorporated into a wide political and economic structural system (Radcliffe-Brown 1940).

Delivering the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture in 1953 for the South African Institute of Race Relations, he remarked that: "To talk of letting the Native peoples of South Africa develop along their own lines was nonsense – their own traditional system had been hacked to pieces and not much of it could be reconstructed".[15]

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13 Malinowski visited urban slumyards in Johannesburg, and it is likely that he discussed these issues with Ellen Hellmann. Certainly the conclusion to her "Rooiyard" sounds the same note: "Even among the Natives of Rooiyard – an outcast and, technically, a criminal population – there is a constant struggle to maintain or reaffirm standards or to create new standards [...]. It seems probable that out of the chaos and confusion which exists in this transition period, there will emerge a people who will adopt such elements of European culture as may enable them to attain to an ordered and economically secure social life" (Hellmann 1948:116–117).

14 Herskovits (1938). Cf. Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936).

15 Cited by Gordon (1990:29).

In 1940, from the same perspective that Radcliffe-Brown outlined before the Royal Anthropological Institute, Max Gluckman published powerful case-studies on the sociology of Zululand. He demonstrated not only that chiefs and native commissioners were actors in a single social drama, but that they represented opposed interests. The dominant cleavage in the system ran between white and black, and shaped all the institutions on both sides of the divide.[16] It was above all money that "established social cohesion by creating common, if dissimilar, interests in a single economic and political system, though it is one with many irreconcilable conflicts". The tension at the heart of the system was only just contained by a series of countervailing practices and institutions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the local government officials prevented Gluckman's return to Zululand after 1939.[17]

III.

Gluckman later devoted a long essay to a critique of Malinowski's theory of cultural change (Gluckman 1947), but Malinowski's approach also had its adherents in South Africa, and some Afrikaner ethnologists made approving references to his writings. Some were cautiously sympathetic to Sobhuza's policy, or even to that of the Zulu Cultural Society, founded in 1937 by Albert Luthuli.

Intellectually, the key figure in the Afrikaner school was W.W.M. Eiselen, who in 1932 became the first professor of ethnology at an Afrikaans-medium university, the University of Stellenbosch. Broadly educated, familiar with British, American and German theories, Eiselen was no simple racist or reactionary. He did not deny that changes had transformed the conditions of life in the African reserves. Indeed, he emphasized that the "relatively simple social organization of the South African Bantu has, in a limited space of time, undergone two major changes".[18] Subordination to the Europeans had undermined tribal institutions. The modern educational system had reinforced "the transmission of ideas, values, attitudes and skills which have not been developed in Bantu society and are often not in harmony with its institutions". Both the organisational and ideological coherence of the Bantu system had therefore been breached. He recognised that one option was to accept these changes and to promote integration, but Eiselen believed that it would be better to check and even to reverse the tendency towards acculturation. The solution was, first of all, to develop the reserves: "if the Reserves can be developed economically and culturally those who come

16 Gluckman (1940a, 1940b). A fascinating account of the genesis of Gluckman's "Analysis of a social situation in modern Zululand" is provided by H. Macmillan (1995).

17 See H. Macmillan (1995:41–42) for the precise reasons for Gluckman's exclusion from Zululand.

18 This citation and those following are drawn from Gordon (1988).

to labour centres will have a background sufficiently rich and respected to prevent their demoralisation". Secondly, an appropriate form of education must be developed which does not alienate a child from his own culture. In short, Eiselen drew on a functionalist mode of argument, but in a very different spirit from Radcliffe-Brown and his students, who concluded from their functionalist analysis that the changes in tribal life were irreversible.

In 1948, a radicalised Afrikaner Nationalist Party came to power, dedicated to a thorough-going policy of segregation, or, as it came to be called, *Apartheid*. Eiselen chaired the new government's commission of enquiry into Bantu education that recommended an educational policy founded on traditional institutions and values. These "contain in themselves the seeds from which can develop a modern Bantu culture fully able to satisfy the aspirations of the Bantu and to deal with the conditions of the modern world". He was later secretary to the Tomlinson Commission, which produced the blue-print for the *Apartheid* system, and he became the civil servant in charge of the Ministry of Native Affairs, to which his former professorial colleague from the University of Stellenbosch, H.F. Verwoerd, was soon appointed as Minister.

The other Afrikaner anthropologists were also by and large committed to the Afrikaner Nationalist movement in which the universities, like the churches, had traditionally been regarded as leading actors. During the five decades that the Afrikaner Nationalists ruled South Africa, the departments of *Volkekunde* in the Afrikaans-speaking universities were expected to contribute to the theory and practice of *Apartheid*, and in general they did what was expected of them.

The intellectual course of Afrikaans anthropology was set by a student of Eiselen, P.J. Coertze, who moved to a Chair at the University of Pretoria in 1951, where he was to remain until his retirement in 1972 (when he was succeeded, in good African style, by his son). From this eminence he ruled Afrikaans academic anthropology for two decades, establishing a tightly-disciplined cadre of ethnologists at the Afrikaans-medium universities. Like Coertze himself, every single professor of ethnology at these Universities was reputedly a member of the Broederbond (an élite Afrikaner secret society).

Coertze and his school propagated what they called ethnos theory[19], which asserted the primordial identity of national groups, and the enduring significance of cultural difference. The ethnos was a cultural group, but it tended to be endogamous, and so developed significant racial traits. Ethnos theory has been described as a sanitised racism, as a version of German romantic cultural theory, and as a Calvinist anthropology, based on the conviction that different peoples had been divinely elected to play their own particular part in history. However, it also had a certain explicit affinity to the culturalist movement in American anthropology, and Melville Herskovits and Ruth

[19] For discussions of ethnos theory see Gordon (1988), Hammond-Tooke (1997:chapter 6), and Sharp (1981).

Benedict, especially, were frequently cited, as was Malinowski, if only as a counterweight to the South African social anthropologists who insisted on the inevitable development of a single South African society. The Afrikaner ethnologists none the less denounced Malinowski's research methods as subjective and unscientific. Participant observation required an intimacy of living that they found uncomfortable, preferring to rely on formal interviews with authority figures.

IV.

Within South Africa, the two traditions, the Afrikaans and the Anglophone, became polarised, and each developed its own national association.[20] But while the Nationalist ethnologists flourished with the development of the *Apartheid* state after 1948, the liberal, Anglophone South African anthropologists went into retreat, or moved abroad. Schapera left in 1950 for the London School of Economics. Z.K. Matthews was one of the defendants in the Treason Trial in 1956, and in 1962 he went into exile. At the same time, Hilda Kuper migrated to the United States. Many of the younger anthropologists also left South Africa, including most of the rising generation of black anthropologists, notably Absolom Vilakazi, Bernard Magubane and, later, Archie Mafeje and Harriet Ngubane.

Gluckman spent the war years in Northern Rhodesia at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. The new research programme that he introduced derived from the radical South African anthropology of the 1930s. When, after the War, he went to Manchester to establish a new department of social anthropology he brought the South African critique of functionalism into the heart of British social anthropology. In the 1970s, reacting against the flirtation of some British colleagues with cultural approaches, Gluckman again drew on his South African experience:

> It is possible in the cloistered seclusion of King's College, Cambridge (or Merton College, Oxford [...], to put the main emphasis on the obstinate differences; it was not possible for 'liberal' South Africans confronted with the policy of segregation within a nation into which 'the others' had been brought, and treated as different – and inferior (Gluckman 1975:29).[21]

But despite the departure of Gluckman, Schapera and others, important new initiatives were developed within South African anthropology. Philip Mayer organised a major study of urbanisation in East London, an industrial city on the borders of the Transkei, which developed the situational model of ethnicity that had been broached

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20 See Sharp (1981).

21 The veiled reference is to two of his main opponents: Edmund Leach was a fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and Rodney Needham of Merton College, Oxford.

by some of Gluckman's associates on the Copperbelt in the 1950s.[22] Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje published a parallel study of Langa, the African location in Cape Town (1963). A Swedish missionary, Bengt Sundkler, published a path-breaking study of African independent churches, "Bantu Prophets in South Africa", in 1948, which stimulated a whole new stream of research on the Africanisation of Christianity. Monica Wilson also began a collaboration with historians. This was, however, soon overtaken by a new wave of African history, which represented in many ways the most stimulating research project in South African studies in this period.

The years between about 1960 and 1985 were the most painful and difficult of the *Apartheid* era, as the African opposition was crushed and its leaders imprisoned or exiled. The terrible machinery of the pass laws, forced resettlement, and Bantu Education ground relentlessly on. This was a period of ideological ferment among opposition intellectuals. The black opposition became polarised between a black power movement, initiated by a linguist at the University of the Witwatersrand, Robert Sobukwe, and developed by Steve Biko, and the increasingly Marxist orientation of the ANC in exile.

The liberal universities were forced to accept the imposition of a racial test on entry, and the liberal tradition appeared to be impotent. Social scientists and historians in the major English-speaking universities now developed a neo-Marxist account of South Africa, which included a critique of anthropology as conservative, and overly concerned with cultural difference. Ethnicity was false consciousness, manipulated by the régime. It was world capitalism that in truth shaped South African society. All anthropologists could effectively contribute was a critique of the discourse of cultural identity, and the documentation of the terrible effects of government policy.

The old structure of Afrikaner anthropology began to break up as the failure of *Apartheid* became apparent. When the great split in Afrikanerdom occurred at the end of the 1970s, Coertze and his son, his right-hand man, left the Nationalist Party to join the Conservative Party, which was committed to the resurrection of *Apartheid*. His son, an equally *verkrampte* figure, succeeded to his chair in Pretoria, but their empire crumbled. Kotze, a former student, who became Professor of Ethnology at the Rand Afrikaans University, was one of the first to break publicly with the ethnos theory. He and the handful of other ethnographers who led the break within Afrikaans anthropology were distinguished by the fact that they had earlier made a methodological move, embracing the suspect method of participant observation. This was both cause and effect of their change of sympathies. The first public expression of their defection was their attendance at meetings of the Anglophone and multi-racial Association of South African Anthropologists in the late 1970s.

Like a number of other radical intellectuals in the English-medium universities, some of the anthropologists came to the conclusion that they had to become actively

22 See the introduction to Mayer (1961).

involved in the resistance to *Apartheid*, and they faced the cruel dilemma of the activist-academic. David Webster, one of the outstanding social anthropologists, turned more and more towards activism, and in 1989 he was assassinated by a secret hit squad. One activist, however, moved in the other direction, towards anthropology. Mamphela Ramphele, then a young doctor, colleague and lover of Steve Biko, was exiled to a remote country district after Biko's murder. When her banning order was lifted in the early 1980s, she moved to a position at the University of Cape Town, and chose to associate herself with the department of social anthropology. Here she carried out a study, typical of the time and place, documenting the desperate conditions in a workers' hostel in Cape Town. "Learning to do research in a methodical way was taxing for one more accustomed to the world of activism", she recalls, but she also found that participant observation had parallels with the intuitive approach of the activist, working her way into a community, assessing the problems, trying to identify the leaders and the factions. None the less, academic work was criticised as a diversion by activists, and anthropology in particular was widely associated with colonialism. Thabo Mbeki challenged her, but

> I replied confidently that he needed to distinguish between good and bad Anthropology. Although a particularly vicious form of Anthropology operated in some Afrikaans-speaking universities, which provided ethnological justification for segregation, there was also another tradition that had earned South African Anthropology a place of honour internationally. Radcliffe-Brown, Monica Wilson, the Mayers and many others had done valuable work which had led to a greater and more sophisticated understanding of South African society (Ramphele 1995:164–167).

In the new South Africa, some old questions have returned. When Mamphela Ramphele visited Mandela in prison, shortly before his release, she had a fierce debate with him about the ANC's policy of recognising and working with established chiefs (Ramphele 1995:202–203). She is now Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town. Another social anthropologist at the University of Cape Town, Harriet Ngubane, was, in contrast, a leading member of the neo-traditionalist, largely Zulu, Inkatha Freedom Party, and she is now a Member of Parliament. Their thinking about the role of traditional authorities is diametrically opposed.

Not only is the position of chiefs a live issue once more. Shortly after the establishment of the ANC government, an official commission of enquiry was set up to investigate witchcraft in the Northern Transvaal. Its chairman was an anthropologist, Victor Raloshai. It seems that the debates that shaped South African anthropology remain relevant to the new South Africa. Perhaps for that reason, it has become a very popular undergraduate option among black students. In the late 1980s several Afrikaans-medium universities closed their departments of ethnology, reasoning that there would no longer be a call for the services of their graduates in the new government. However, they are being obliged to reopen them, because of the demand from the

black students. Today there are so many calls on anthropologists to act as consultants, and to carry out applied research, that fundamental ethnographic research is suffering.

This has been a hasty sketch of a single case, and I hesitate to impose a general moral on such a partial and particular story. A few points might nevertheless be worth a mention in conclusion. First, we must surely move on from the generalised accounts of colonial anthropology that represent it as part of the ideological apparatus of Empire, or the reflection of colonial interests. We should rather consider the ways in which not only the politics of the day but also the nature of their encounters in the field could form the minds of anthropologists and influence the theoretical discourse. More generally, while none of the scholars I have been discussing were detached from current political debates, only a small number were ideologues. Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski, Schapera, Hoernlé, Jabavu, Matthews, Gluckman, Ngubane and Ramphele all had in common both an engagement with public issues and a belief in the value of scholarship and scientific detachment.

But political experiences, and the formative influence of ethnographic studies, are only part of the story. The impact of metropolitan theories must also be considered, but keeping two reservations in mind. First, there were competing theories in the great centres – in the 1930s, the South African anthropologists argued about Malinowski's ideas as against those of Radcliffe-Brown, and also for and against the British tendencies as opposed to alternative theories which came from Germany and the USA. Secondly, the periphery could also influence the centre: the case of South African anthropology in the 1930s shows this very clearly.

Finally, there are indications that the tradition of debate and investigation initiated in the 1920s will continue, and may even flourish. In the 1990s, with the end of the academic boycott, there is at last a flow of foreign anthropologists doing research in South Africa. They will have to engage with the concerns of their South African colleagues, and will surely, once more, carry ideas both to and from the international scholarly community.

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