

FORUM

Anthropology at the dawn of apartheid  
Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski's South African engagements, 1919–1934

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*Abstract:* In this article, I focus on different strategies of anthropological engagement with government and potential funders. I do so by considering the diverse nature of Alfred Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski's encounters with South African authorities, between 1919 and 1934. I suggest that Radcliffe-Brown saw South Africa as an integrated society in which segregation was impossible, and advocated the sympathetic scientific understanding of cultural difference within this context. By contrast, Malinowski was committed to a romantic vision of holistic cultures, collaborated directly with colonial authorities, and argued for a policy of effective cultural and territorial segregation. The strategies had important long-term consequences and costs, calculable only from the privileged vantage point of history.

*Keywords:* ethics, history of anthropology, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, South Africa

A host of ethical obligations pertain to the conduct of anthropologists toward research participants, funders, government, the broader discipline, and the wider public. Existing ethical guidelines posit that anthropologists should strive to uphold the principle of informed consent, meet all obligations toward funders, be honest and candid in our relations with colleagues and government, and communicate our findings to the benefit of the widest possible community. Where there are conflicts of interest, the concerns of research participants should carry the greatest weight (ASA 2013).<sup>1</sup>

Recent changes in the academic landscape threaten to disrupt this balance of obligations. The British government previously funded university departments through a system of block grants. Currently, anthropologists depend upon student fees and grants based on impact assessments for salaries, and upon the priorities of private corporations and public bodies, such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), for research funds (Fardon 2011). H. Gutherson warns that for a discipline that has “reconstructed itself around critical theory” the effects could be “intellectually deadly.” He argues that



few classical texts would have been of interest to funders such as BAE Systems or Bristol-Myers Squibb (2011: 2) It would also be erroneous to assume that the interests of potential funders neatly align with those of research participants and the broader public. Under these conditions, doing ethical anthropology requires strategic navigation and negotiating a nearly impossible balance between the competing interests of different stakeholders (Meskell and Pels 2005).

In this article, I contemplate how experiences during the early 1900s can inform present-day dilemmas. At the time, as H. Kuklik (1991) shows, anthropology lacked any clear institutional base, and demonstrations of the discipline's utility assumed overriding importance. I focus specifically on Alfred Radcliffe-Brown's and Bronislaw Malinowski's engagements with South Africa from 1919 to 1934.<sup>2</sup> These are insightful because of the preeminent status of these anthropologists, and because of the high stakes involved. As Max Gluckman (1975) points out, arguments about human difference possess special salience in a country where government has pursued harsh racial and ethnic discrimination.

During this time the "native question" assumed cardinal importance in the country. The Union of South Africa was constituted in 1910, following colonial conquest and the South African war. Very few Africans held voting rights, and land alienation was extreme. By 1919, Africans were legally prohibited from acquiring land outside native reserves, which comprised only 8 percent of the country's land surface. Yet more than a million African labor tenants resided on white-owned farms, and over 200,000 African men worked in the Witwatersrand mines, which produced 40 percent of the world's gold (Beinhart 1994: 98). Even larger numbers of African factory workers resided in the rapidly growing urban slum yards and locations. Popular discontent about land and labor issues often culminated in violence. In 1921 police killed 200 members of a religious sect who refused to pay taxes and vacate state land at Bulhoek (Edgar 1988). The next year, 230 people died during violent confrontations between white miners and govern-

ment over the employment of cheaper African laborers. During the national elections of 1924, J. B. M. Hertzog's National Party defeated Jan Smuts's South African Party. Hertzog entrenched the "color bar" and ensured favorable employment for whites in all state-run enterprises. He also sought to counter urbanization by retribalizing Africans, bolstering chieftaincy, and developing the reserves. In 1933, during the Great Depression, Hertzog and Smuts's parties merged to form a "fusion" government. This government removed Africans from the voter's roll and still pursued segregationist policies. Elements within government were, nonetheless, receptive of liberal opinion.

I look beyond the theories for which Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski are best remembered, toward the complex political and institutional engagement of their work. As cosmopolitan European intellectuals, they were united in their rejection of social evolutionist dogma. Yet they differed vastly in their political commitments, their understandings of the South African landscape, and in the way they engaged with government. During his tenure at the University of Cape Town, from 1921 to 1925, Radcliffe-Brown sought to promote scientific, sympathetic understanding of cultural difference within an integrated society. His strategy was akin to contemporary attempts to "popularize anthropology" (Erikson 2006), and speak truth to power, from a position of analytical independence. Since 1926 Malinowski mentored several South African anthropologists, and in 1934 he visited the country to address an important educational conference. Malinowski's utilitarian vision of science led him to collaborate more closely with colonial authorities in policy formation, and his romantic, holistic vision of different cultures led him to propagate segregationist policies.

From the privileged vantage point of history, it is possible to ascertain the different long-term impacts of these strategies. I suggest that Malinowski's strategy of collaborative engagement offered greater immediate advantages than Radcliffe-Brown's one of analytical independence, but it also bore long-term costs. In retrospect,

it is apparent that Radcliffe-Brown's work informed liberal activism against racial segregation, whereas Malinowski's arguments provided intellectual legitimacy to the discriminatory systems of the Bantu Education Act and, ultimately, to apartheid.

### Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, 1920–1926

Radcliffe-Brown's intellectual biography provides evidence of a critical, independent mindset. Born in Birmingham in 1881, his upbringing was far from privileged. After his father's death in 1886, his maternal grandparents took care of him, while his mother worked as a companion (A. Kuper 1983: 37). As a young man, Radcliffe-Brown was influenced by the social reformer Havelock Ellis, and by the Russian anarchist thinker Pyotr Kropotkin. He met Kropotkin in Kent to discuss the ills of England. Kropotkin reportedly advised him first to try to understand social life before attempting to change it, and to begin by studying "primitive" societies before investigating more complex ones, such as England (Langham 1981: 371).

Radcliffe-Brown proceeded to read moral and mental sciences at Cambridge, and then completed a postgraduate diploma in anthropology under Alfred Haddon and W. H. R. Rivers (Stocking 1995: 307). As student, he earned the nickname "Anarchy Brown." His fieldwork in the Andaman Islands (1906–1908) and in Western Australia (1910–1911) was modeled on the approaches that his mentors had devised during the Torres Straits expedition. He aimed to reconstruct precolonial ways of life, and relied greatly on the memories of his informants (A. Kuper 1983: 44). His conduct in Australia, nonetheless, sparked controversy. While his party collected information on marriage systems near Sandstone, Radcliffe-Brown hid two Aboriginal men, fleeing from a police posse, in his tent (45).

In his subsequent lectures at Cambridge, Birmingham, and at the London School of Economics (LSE), and in his writings, Radcliffe-Brown broke from the evolutionary concerns

of his mentors. He explicitly rejected the doctrine that certain customs were survivals from earlier times, without contemporary significance. The doctrine, he argued, prejudices the utility of customs and does not explain people's conservatism (Radcliffe-Brown [1913a] 1976). Drawing on philosophies of the Enlightenment (Barnard 1992) and on Durkheim's sociology, Radcliffe-Brown developed an alternative approach, focused on the synchronic analysis of social structure. This is apparent in his attempt to correlate totemic beliefs with different marriage systems (Radcliffe-Brown 1913b).

In 1914 Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski both attended a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Australia, where they seemed to form an alliance against historical diffusionist theories. The outbreak of World War I prevented their return to Europe. For the next five years, Radcliffe-Brown taught English at a prestigious Sydney grammar school, and became director of education in the Kingdom of Tonga. In 1918 he also served as a volunteer in Fiji, where British ships had introduced a ravaging influenza epidemic. These experiences reinforced his critical views of colonial authorities (Campbell 2014: 98, 108).

Radcliffe-Brown contracted tuberculosis in the Pacific and, on medical advice, decided to join his brother, Herbert, in South Africa, where the latter worked as a mining engineer (Stocking 1995: 305). Here Radcliffe-Brown taught English and psychology at different colleges in Johannesburg, and worked as curator at the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria. On his request, Haddon wrote to South Africa's then prime minister, Jan Smuts, to plead for the establishment of an ethnological bureau, and to draw his attention to Radcliffe-Brown's presence in the country.<sup>3</sup> Smuts informed Radcliffe-Brown that the government had established a School of African Life and Languages at the University of Cape Town. Following rigorous selection procedures, Radcliffe-Brown was appointed as a professor at the school (Schapera 1990). The school was created to study the languages and customs of the largest section of the country's population, and

to assist administrators in overcoming barriers to linguistic and cultural understanding (Phillips 1993: 22). But there was much opposition to the school in parliament, and the government cut its annual grant from £3,000 to £1,500 in 1921 (Gordon 1990: 40).

As a professor of social anthropology, Radcliffe-Brown sought to promote rigorous scientific understanding of the lives of indigenous people, but maintain critical distance from government. In his inaugural lecture, he said, it is now possible to study “the South African native” scientifically. Social anthropology, he argued, concerns “the characteristics of man in society” and investigates the languages, economic systems, moral laws, and beliefs that people owe to their social environments. Through systematic comparisons, it seeks to discover laws of coordination between elements of social systems. Radcliffe-Brown warned his audience that segregation was impossible in South Africa. The country was profoundly integrated: contact with Europeans had modified “lower types,” and the existence of a “vast body of cheap labour” had changed “the European type.” In such a context, anthropology was vital to future guidance. “We cannot trust government,” he said, to “people who ... had but the slightest knowledge of the knowledge which regulated the growth and change of the human spirit.” Natives did not obey government laws because they appealed to their consciousness; they obeyed the laws simply because they feared the power of the white man. The solution, he argued, was the careful, “long, strenuous and difficult scientific study” of changes in human life.<sup>4</sup>

Radcliffe-Brown’s tenure was highly productive. In Cape Town, he published *The Andaman Islanders*; several essays on Australia; and articles in which he spelled out his vision for the discipline (1922a, 1922b, [1923a] 1958, 1923b, [1924a] 1958, [1924b] 1986, 1926). He felt that he could do more for research by teaching students about scientific theory than by doing fieldwork himself. In a letter to his colleague William Norton, Radcliffe-Brown asked, “what

sorts of fieldwork in geology can a man carry out who had no special interest as a geologist?”<sup>5</sup> He also collaborated with Winifred Hoernlé, lecturer in ethnology at the University of the Witwatersrand, to establish a joint framework for social anthropological studies.

In “The Methods of Ethnology and Social Anthropology,” argues that a historical approach, called ethnology, has thus far dominated the study of culture. Ethnology aims to explain institutions, such as government, by tracing their stages of development from the earliest times to the present: “Whenever we have adequate historical data, we may study culture this way” ([1923a] 1958: 4). But in the case of “uncivilized people,” where such data is absent, scholars rely on hypothetical reconstructions of the past. Ethnologists are prone to make unsubstantiated conjectures about the origins of institutions. For example, Fraser postulated that totemism arose from the mistaken belief that women were impregnated by the food they ate (Radcliffe-Brown 1922: 17). Such claims cannot explain its continuous existence. Social anthropology, by contrast, seeks to formulate general laws underlying culture, based on well-authenticated facts. Unlike ethnological hypotheses, we can verify social anthropological observations. Radcliffe-Brown’s own theory, that animal species significant in the social lives of hunters become objects of totemic observation, can be confirmed, rejected, or modified by further observations, and by comparisons with material from elsewhere. For progress to be made, fieldwork should be conducted by trained persons, able to test a hypothesis in the field.

He demonstrates this approach by means of an analysis of classificatory kinship systems (1922b) and the status of the mother’s brother ([1924a] 1958). Among the Tsonga, who are patrilineal, a close relation exists between a boy and his mother’s brother. The boy was permitted special privileges: he ate food prepared for the mother’s brother and claimed some of the mother’s brother’s property as inheritance. H. Junod ([1917] 1966) had postulated that these

relations were a survival from an earlier matrilineal stage. But Radcliffe-Brown saw them as part of a wider system. He observes that relations with the mother's brother contrasts sharply to those with the father's sister, whom boys treated with reverence and respect. For Radcliffe-Brown these relations exemplify the principles of "equivalence of siblings" and an "extension of sentiments." Boys extended sentiments from the mother onto her brother, and treated him as a sort of "male mother"—with tenderness, love, and indulgence. By contrast, they perceived the father's sister as an authoritative "female father."<sup>6</sup> Because greater familiarity existed in relations between persons of the same sex, boys treated the mother's brother with greater closeness than would be possible toward their own mother. This contrasted with the situation in matrilineal societies, where the mother's brother was far more authoritative.

Radcliffe-Brown supervised Hoernlé's fieldwork on the Nama in urban locations of Windhoek, South West Africa (now Namibia). Based on this research, she wrote a report to the government, which told a tragic story of dispossession and poverty and bemoaned the imposition of prohibitive taxes and the withdrawal of state rations (Bank 2016: 23). She also used his concepts of "social value," the "sib," and "joking relationships" to analyze the material she collected on ritual, social organization, and marriage (Hoernlé 1923, 1925a, 1925b). With Hoernlé, Radcliffe-Brown was elected to the editorial board of *Bantu* (later *African*) *Studies*. Radcliffe-Brown also served as external examiner of Hoernlé's students—Eileen and Jack Krige, Max Gluckman, Ellen Hellman, and Hilda Kuper (née Beemer)—who subsequently made an important mark on the discipline.

Former students recalled that Radcliffe-Brown's lectures at the University of Cape Town were both lively and stimulating. Isaac Schapera, who switched from law to anthropology, described him as "a bloody good undergraduate teacher." "He never lectured from notes, but he was so lucid you wrote everything down." But

"with graduate studies he did not know what to talk about. He said it all already" (quoted in A. Kuper 2001: 4). Student enrollment in anthropology grew from 11 students in 1922 to 45 students in 1925 (Phillips 1993: 27). Schapera, the only student to proceed to graduate studies, later produced an enormous corpus of work on the Tswana. However, William Norton's courses in Bantu philology seldom attracted more than a single student. This frequently brought him in conflict with Radcliffe-Brown (22).

Radcliffe-Brown did not use science as a cloak to avoid engagement with an increasingly repressive South African regime. In correspondence with Norton, he emphasized the School of African Life and Language's insecure financial situation, and wrote: "The trouble is that we have to make a show. Once we have succeeded we shall be more free to choose our own work without reference to outside considerations."<sup>7</sup> He nonetheless questioned the direct utility of anthropology in policy formation. In his opinion science should be separated from policy, and the anthropologist "must avoid prejudice and bias" and keep himself "free from concern with the practical applications of the laws that it is his business to discover" (1922b: 37). But anthropology did offer comprehension of "a different set of human beings, who acted and thought in a different way" (38). A sympathetic understanding of social laws and customs could "assist efforts to deal with the maladies of civilization" and help avoid friction arising from the "government of native races." Future welfare, he argued, "depends upon finding some way in which two different races, with very different forms of civilisation, *may live together in one society*, politically, morally and socially in close contact, without the loss to the white race of things in its civilisation that are of greatest value, and without increasing unrest and disturbance" (31; emphasis added).

Radcliffe-Brown deployed various means to promote anthropological knowledge to a broader audience. He gave public lectures on topics such as "How Natives Should Be Treated,"<sup>8</sup> "Art and

Civilization,”<sup>9</sup> “The Functions of Universities,”<sup>10</sup> “The Mind of the Savage (A Critique of Levy-Bruhl),”<sup>11</sup> and “The Ascend of Man.”<sup>12</sup> Radcliffe-Brown also established an ethnological museum at the University of Cape Town, to which Hornlé donated 32 objects, purchased from the Nama (Bank 2016: 17). (The collection was later transferred to the South African Museum.)

Under his direction, the School of African Life and Languages organized vacation courses for missionaries and civil servants. The Native Affairs Department did not grant employees special leave for attending the courses, but it paid those who gained the school’s diploma a bonus of £50 per annum (Phillips 1993: 26). Radcliffe-Brown did not shy away from criticism. In a lecture offered to the vacation school, he criticized officials for the harm they were causing. He argued that during the Bambata rebellion, Zulu people objected, not only to taxes, but also to the form they took. By leveling a poll tax on young men, the government undermined the authority of their fathers, who administered household property. Radcliffe-Brown urged missionaries, who “take it upon themselves to change a civilization of a people,” to make a sincere attempt to understand the functions and meanings of native customs. For example, should missionaries succeed in abolishing sacrifices to the ancestors, they would most likely weaken native families. Before officials could eliminate the belief in witchcraft, they had to understand the forces that sustained it. Conversion to Christianity, Radcliffe-Brown argued, would not suppress these beliefs. The church itself had conducted witch trials, and teachings of miracles reinforced the belief in magic. Other means of explaining misfortune and of relieving unrest—such as blaming the government and voting for the opposition in the next election—are more likely to have the desired effect (Radcliffe-Brown 1924b: 17–21).

Insecure officials might well have felt threatened by his pronouncements. But Africans and white liberals were often complementary. J. D. Jabavu, South Africa’s leading black intellectual, commented. “The acquisition of his [Radcliffe-

Brown’s] services by the university is nothing less than a piece of good fortune.” He praised Radcliffe-Brown’s “unbiased racial outlook,” and he urged the government to “provide more liberal support for this cause.”<sup>13</sup> Radcliffe-Brown found a constituency among more liberal magistrates in the Transkei, whom he twice addressed on aspects of native law. In a letter, W. T. Welsch, the Transkei’s chief magistrate, who was an anti-segregationist, wrote to Radcliffe-Brown that “[h]earing you ... opened up new avenues of thought” and stimulated “more intelligent interest in the problems which so frequently confront us in our work.”<sup>14</sup>

Radcliffe-Brown’s support for the aspirations of South Africa’s majority was also apparent in his work as vice chairman of the Cape Peninsula Native Welfare Society. In this capacity, he told journalists of the plight of the 7,000 natives living in Cape Town who were charged with vagrancy upon being found outside the borders of native townships.<sup>15</sup> The society supported a popular request to name a new settlement Langa after Chief Langalibalele, who was banished to Robben Island for leading a rebellion by the Hlubi in 1873. It had no reservations about “honouring a rebel,” and argued that outsiders might mispronounce the alternative name, Nqubele (“success” in Xhosa) (Coetzer 2009: 7).

In 1925 Radcliffe-Brown testified to the national Economic and Wage Commission. In the wake of the 1922 revolt, J. B. M. Hertzog advocated a “civilized labor policy” that would serve the interests of white workers, and established the commission to investigate the feasibility of different policies. The commissioners failed to reach unanimity, and issued two separate reports. Mills and colleagues found that skilled (white) laborers earned far higher wages than their international counterparts, but that unskilled (black) laborers were underpaid (Union of South Africa 1926: 7–252). Andrews and colleagues were more supportive of Hertzog. They found that the wages of white workers, who were more skilled than their British counterparts, had not risen in relation to national income. “To maintain a white civilization in South

Africa,” they argued, “white workers had to receive a civilized wage” (255). Industries should hire white workers instead of Africans.

Radcliffe-Brown opposed segregation and retribalization. He stated that it was neither possible nor desirable to exclude “the native” from European areas “and leave him to develop an economy of his own.” He said that European-owned industries depended on native laborers, and that 300,000 natives lived in urban areas, with no connections to the reserves. He also cautioned: “Anything you say about the native individually could not apply generally.” “Some had changed materially and they approximate to the European both in mode of life, economic occupations, and their outlook on life generally and in their individualism” (Union of South Africa 1926: 356). “This process,” he argued, “cannot be reversed and must be controlled in the interests of the native.” “No limit can be placed on the development of native capacity” and “the range of occupations available to natives should be widened” (357). He also pleaded for more land to safeguard against exploitation, and criticized the 1913 Natives Land Act for undermining the native economy, and for weakening the family system on which life is organized. Moreover, Radcliffe-Brown condemned the criminal prosecution of African workers who broke service contracts. He argued that European lawyers had devised this provision “with a singular lack of logic.” Africans treat debt seriously, but “no such thing as contract exists in native law.” “The native looks at the contract as a mysterious device on the part of the white man for getting the best out of him.” “The native has the highest respect for his own law,” but “attracts no stigma for undergoing a term of imprisonment for breach of contract” (329).

In 1926 Radcliffe-Brown resigned to take up a chair in social anthropology in Sydney. In a letter to Haddon,<sup>16</sup> he explained that he had successfully advertised anthropology, and that the discipline was by now well established in South Africa. Sydney provided a more suitable base from which to pursue his interests in Australia and in Asia. There were also better prospects for

attracting funding to build up a department and to support field research.

### Bronislaw Malinowski, 1909–1934

Bronislaw Malinowski came of age in a context colored by romantic nationalist sentiments. Born in Kraków, Poland, in 1884, he was the son of Lujan Malinowski, a Slavic philologist and folklorist at Jangellonian University. Lujan descended from the *szlachta* nobility, who had lost their status as the governing class under Russian rule. Many *szlachta*, like Lujan, abandoned the countryside and joined the urban intelligentsia, where they took it upon themselves to carry “the torch of learning,” and to preserve Polish culture (Young 2004: 9, 11).

In 1902, four years after his father’s death, Malinowski entered the same university to study physics, mathematics, and philosophy. In his thesis, Malinowski defended the principle of an “economy” of thought. Ideas, he argued, formulated what people instinctively knew, were refined through the process of trial and error, and ultimately aimed at self-preservation of the individual and the species (Malinowski [1908] 1993). This theory informed his subsequent utilitarian vision of culture, and commitment to the direct application of scientific knowledge. From Poland, Malinowski moved to Leipzig to study philosophy and psychology. Here, Wilhelm Wundt’s argument for interdependence of “mental expressions”—such as language, myth, and religion—laid the groundwork for a holistic conception of culture (A. Kuper 1983: 11).

Malinowski’s infatuation with Annie Brunton, a South African pianist, brought him to London, where he enrolled to study anthropology at the LSE. It is through her, he claimed, that he developed a fascination with England, where, he believed, “culture had reached its highest standards” (Young 2004: 129). In 1912 Brunton left London to take up a position as music teacher in Cape Town. But Malinowski remained to complete a library-based PhD on the family among Australian Aborigines.

In 1914, he accompanied Radcliffe-Brown to a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Australia. Malinowski, too, did not return to Europe after the outbreak of World War I, but instead arranged to do fieldwork in the Mailu and Trobriand Islands. He quickly attained fluency in the vernacular and collected extremely detailed ethnographic information on different layers of social life (A. Kuper 1983: 16). His field diary, nonetheless, shows outbursts of anger at the Trobrianders (Malinowski 1967). Malinowski developed far greater antipathy toward missionaries, whom he wrote “destroy the native’s joy in life,” than toward the paternalistic administrators of the islands (Young 2004: 341, 382–390).

At the LSE, where he took up a teaching position in 1922, Malinowski built a reputation as a renowned scholar, largely based on his famous Trobriand monographs. In these monographs, he sought to demonstrate that, when viewed in an appropriate context, the beliefs and customs of “primitives” appeared entirely rational. Malinowski also distinguished himself as an exceptionally skilled politician of the academe, who constructed a large cosmopolitan network of students and successfully advertised anthropology to the university management and broader colonial establishment (see Goody 1995: 26–41, 68–78).

He maintained far closer relations with government than Radcliffe-Brown might have advised, and vocally supported Lord Frederick Lugard’s policy of “indirect rule,” in which Britain sought to control natives through their own institutions. Malinowski (1929: 23) wrote, “direct rule incorrectly assumed that we can transform Africans into semi-civilized pseudo-European citizens within a few years.” Undoing the “old system of traditions,” he warned, might result in “black bolshevism” (25). Gellner (1987: 558) suggests that Malinowski might well have associated indirect rule with the situation of Poland under the Hapsburg Empire, for which he had “undistinguished admiration.” The empire kept central European nations from fighting each other, protected them from the Russians, and

ensured the preservation of indigenous cultures, which gave richness to life.

In 1929 Malinowski helped the International Africa Institute (IAI) secure a five-year grant for ethnological research from the Rockefeller Foundation. The grant was used to launch the journal *Africa*, and to fund the work of research fellows. The fellows were to receive a year’s training in research methods at the LSE, before doing fieldwork in different African locations. In this capacity, he came to mentor several South African graduate students: some as IAI fellows, others as independent scholars. They included Meyer Fortes, Isaac Schapera, Eileen Krige, Jack Krige, Ellen Hellmann, Max Gluckman, and Hilda Kuper (students of Radcliffe-Brown and Hoernlé); P. J. Schoeman (from Stellenbosch), Monica Wilson, and Zacharias Matthews (from the Eastern Cape); Jack Simons (a specialist in native law); Tim Mtimkulu (a church leader); and O. E. Emanuelson (an inspector of schools from Natal).

While these fellows did research, Malinowski made the case for practically relevant anthropology. For him, contra Radcliffe-Brown, anthropology offered more than a simple “habit of mind.” The discipline could and should contribute directly to solving problems of governance (Malinowski 1929, 1930b). He argued that ethnographic knowledge was vital for supervising any system of indirect rule, and that anthropologists were better equipped than district officers to study “the actual way in which tribal practice and tribal laws work” (Malinowski 1929: 28). Only in-depth studies of actual land use by natives can reveal the “indispensable minimum that must be reserved for them” (33). Knowledge of incentives that drive men “to strenuous, prolonged and often unpleasant effort” was essential to keeping natives satisfied while working for white men (36).

Malinowski was outspoken on South African issues. Unlike Radcliffe-Brown, he did not see integration as inevitable. In a talk on the BBC, he argued that Britain would “yield to competitive political pressures” if she did not fully exploit the colonies (1930a: 4). But Britain should

also defend the long-term interests of natives, on whose labor colonial developments depend. Malinowski deplored the fact that natives currently work under conditions resembling slavery. The imposition of taxes induced men to leave the reserves, and adverse conditions in the compounds seriously impinged upon their liberty. These measures were not a corrective to native laziness. Natives objected to forced labor, but worked energetically in their own reserves. "The real evil [is that] we force the native to labour on products which he does not wish to produce so that he must satisfy needs which he does not need to satisfy. The money he is being paid is useless to him" (13).

Malinowski criticizes Smuts for opening up Africa for more investment and white settlement. This, he warns, would lead to the formation of a rigid, caste-like system. "The existence of two racial stocks, side by side is inevitably a source of serious dangers, and the starting point of a long series of troubles" (1930a: 28). The "steamroller of universal western culture" would also provoke fierce resistance. It was preferable to slow down the pace of development, limit European settlement and African labor migration, and maintain large tribal reserves where natives can be "developed along indigenous lines" (29).

In a polemical essay, Malinowski accuses proponents of racial equality of hypocrisy. "To profess that racial differences do not exist and that black and white should be equally treated, may well be enough for a personal pious wish, but every honest European knows that he never acts up to such protestations." Racial differences and prejudices were real. "Members of non-European races feel race prejudice as strongly as we do" and "would welcome a colour bar protecting them from Europeans" (1931: 999). "Half-castes," he continues, "are a burden to their parents as a rule and a cause of serious maladjustment in every community." Instead, we should "allow either race to lead its own life, free from interference." In South Africa, he writes, "a strong case has been made by the natives themselves and by their real friends for complete segregation" and for "territorial, cultural and economic autonomy for

either race" (1,000). Malinowski advocates that whites should be deported from East Africa, to "give the coloured races elbow room," and continues to suggest that it was possible "to preserve a country for its own race" (1,001).

Malinowski's arguments for cultural autonomy placed him at odds with his more liberal South African students, who were committed to improving the lot of black people within the framework of a common society. They appreciated his focus on current affairs and his seminar-based teaching, but complained about aspects of his personality, his functionalism, and his political views. Schapera twice resigned as Malinowski's research assistant (A. Kuper 2001: 7); Fortes felt insulted by Malinowski in seminars and refused to submit field reports to him from Ghana for more than six months;<sup>17</sup> Matthews (1981: 104) described his functionalist arguments as "overdone"; Wilson was irked by his dismissal of history (Morrow and Saunders 2013: 291); and Hilda Kuper recalled that he disapproved of her interests in Marxism (H. Kuper 1984: 196). More conservative students, such as Eileen and Jack Krige and the Afrikaner nationalist P. J. Schoeman, were more accepting of his approach. To Malinowski's credit, he remained fiercely loyal to all his students.

During July and August 1934, the Rockefeller Foundation sponsored Malinowski to visit South Africa to tour the country, meet students in the field, and address conferences of the New Education Fellowship. In Johannesburg, Malinowski stayed with Winifred and Alfred Hoernlé, who arranged for him to visit mining compounds, locations, and townships.<sup>18</sup> He accompanied Hilda Kuper to Swaziland, where she was starting to do fieldwork. Here King Sobuza II, the Swazi monarch whom Malinowski described as "keen on keeping up with old institutions,"<sup>19</sup> hosted them. Malinowski also spent a day with Smuts, at his home outside Pretoria.

The three papers that Malinowski presented to the New Education Fellowship conferences—convened by the South African government to discuss trends toward the secularization of

knowledge (Krige 1997)—were exceptionally well attended. To his wife, Elsie Masson, Malinowski wrote, “I am taking matters as seriously as possible, for the Native question is a rather tragic thing here.”<sup>20</sup> On 9 July, his first talk, “Sex and Modern Life,” provoked much interest: “scores of listeners could only find seats on the floor.”<sup>21</sup> Malinowski suggested that changing conditions, such as the emergence of economically independent women, brought about new opportunities to practice sex in undesirable ways. Contraception, he observed, made love-making easy and afforded a means to regulate parenthood wisely. “I do not sympathize with repressive policeman methods. I do not approve of pushing the woman back into the kitchen. If I had to choose between contraception and Hitler, I would always punt for contraception.” Under these conditions, sex education was essential. Pupils need to be taught the beauty of sex in relationships between two partners, and that its fullest expression is to be found in parenthood (Malherbe 1937: 193–198). Malinowski criticized the law by which a woman teacher should relinquish her position upon marriage.<sup>22</sup> “If we expect women teachers to give sex and sociological instruction, is it sound that we leave it to spinsters without experience of love and motherhood?”<sup>23</sup>

In his second talk, Malinowski underlined the significance of the family as agent in the transmission of culture. Contra notions of “primitive promiscuity,” he argued that monogamous marriages existed in all primitive societies. Only with a wife can a man set up a household and cultivate fields, and only as a father can he attain adult status. In the past, the family had overcome disintegrating forces such as extortions by chiefs, slavery, and compulsory labor. But in contemporary times, it faced new challenges. The family had ceased to be a unit of production and consumption, and contraception as well as nurseries threatened its continued viability. Malinowski urged government to ensure real advantages to those who enter marriage and produce families. Cold scientific planning can never supersede maternal love, the attachments

between spouses, and the father’s interests in his wife’s offspring (Malherbe 1937: 346–351).

In Johannesburg, nearly two thousand listeners attended Malinowski’s third talk, which was chaired by Jan Smuts, then minister of justice. Malinowski made a passionate plea for native autonomy. He argued that under the present system natives were compelled to make themselves useful to Europeans, and even to fight the white men’s battles. “Just as the Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaner wanted his own. So, the native too would ask for home-rule, political and economic independence, and the right to self-determination.” “As a white man,” Malinowski said, “he considered the white man’s interests to be paramount, but did not object to natives claiming the right to develop along their own lines.”<sup>24</sup>

Turning to education, Malinowski deplored the imposition of European-style schooling “upon people in simple tribal conditions of Africa” (1936: 3). Africans do possess the mental capacity for European-style education, but such schooling estranged them from “traditions still controlling the tribe” (4). Mission schools taught children contempt for the ways of their parents, and raised dangerous political ambitions. The white community, he observed, is “not prepared to grant a native, however educated and intelligent, that place to which he is entitled by training.” But rather than blame government for limiting native opportunities, he argues: “It [schooling] ought also to give him a clear idea from the outset of his artificially imposed disabilities, so as not to develop in him the hope that through education he can become the white man’s ‘brother’ and his economic and political equal” (25).

African children “must acquire some elements of the invading culture” that are useful for the capacities in which they are employed by Europeans. These should include the languages of government, arithmetic, technical subjects, natural history, and an “inverted anthropology” of European laws and customs to counter “malicious gossip” about whites. Children should be taught by fellow tribesmen in a manner congruent with traditional pedagogy, and their school-

ing should be harmonized with the education they receive at home. “The vast majority of Africans still live in an African world from which they have to emerge, but partially and occasionally” (21). But education alone does not guarantee progress. “They need more land than we have left them, more economic opportunities than we have opened up for them, and greater political autonomy” (36).

None of the other anthropologists who spoke at the conference questioned the value of European schooling for Africans. Winifred Hoernlé ([1936] 2015) argued that the “old tribal system” could not be maintained in its original state. Rather than stimulate the development of a race consciousness, she suggested, “our aim should, surely, be a sound and healthy spirit of South African citizenship, which can animate both blacks and whites.” She also bemoaned the fact that Africans were not taught the universal principles of science, which could benefit them no less than their “white masters.” Alfred Hoernlé argued that Africans did not ask “for development along their own lines,” and that advocates of this policy had failed “to tell us what those lines are” (Malherbe 1937: 417). There was also criticism from other sources. A black listener asked Malinowski whether native education should be “based on bread-and-butter lines, instead of purely African or European lines.”<sup>25</sup>

Malinowski’s talks on sex education might well have upset the prudish and patriarchal proclivities of Afrikaner nationalists. But his position on education accorded with Hertzog’s emphasis on segregation and the retribalization of Africans. It also resonated with the recommendations of the Native Economic Commission of 1932 that social education focused on developing the reserves should replace mission schooling. It is telling that the rectors of all Afrikaans-medium universities invited Malinowski to address their students, who were beset by fears of racial integration.<sup>26</sup> Malinowski declined, owing to a demanding schedule. But he did tell a reporter of the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Volksblad* that he had sided with Afrikan-

ers during the South African war, and that as a Pole, who had also experienced oppression, he empathized with their situation in South Africa. “I understand that your traditional encounter with the native generated racial hatred. As an anthropologist, I know that this is unavoidable in any society where two races live next to each other. I do not blame Afrikaner people where they refuse to acknowledge the native as absolute equal—the native is possibly very different” (author’s translation).

Serious debate followed Malinowski’s departure from South Africa. Proponents of segregated education urged the government to transfer African education to the Native Affairs Department. Following the electoral victory by D. F. Malan’s National Party in 1948, the segregated system of the Bantu Education Act became a hallmark of the South African apartheid policies.

## Conclusions

Through their South African engagements, Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski both sought to secure a more visible presence for the emerging anthropological discipline. There were, nonetheless, stark differences in the manner in which they understood the South African situation and in the respective approaches they advocated. Radcliffe-Brown underlined the importance of comprehending cultural differences within the context of an integrated and rapidly changing social system. He used diverse means—including museum exhibits, vacation courses, and public lectures—to promote the sympathetic, scientific understanding of indigenous people. Yet, even though he testified to official commissions and sought to promote the interests of the disenfranchised, he maintained a position of analytical independence. In London, Malinowski advocated direct collaboration with the colonial establishment. Malinowski’s interventions transcended advocating a scientific outlook, and often took the form of specific contributions to problems of governance. These ranged from recommen-

dations about the greater fairness in the maintenance of a color bar to the creation of native reserves and school curricula. His broader ideological commitment to protecting autonomous cultures put him in league with powerful political actors, including proponents of indirect rule such as Lord Lugard, African traditionalists such as King Sobuza II, and emerging Afrikaner nationalist thinkers such as P. J. Schoeman.

Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski's engagements with South Africa show the complexities involved in negotiating a balance in obligations toward different constituencies, who hold contradictory interests. Radcliffe-Brown's more scholarly interventions helped secure a fragile institutional base for anthropological pursuits in a hostile environment. But there is little doubt that Malinowski's strategy of collaborative engagement was eminently more successful in negotiating the intricacies of funding regimes of the time. It helped secure funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, which paved the way for what Goody (1995) calls "the expansive moment" in Africanist anthropology. My reading of archival and documentary sources suggests that Malinowski's strategic engagements did not simply amount to opportunistic salesmanship, but were based on deeply rooted and sincerely held views.

The moral and ethical judgments implicit in their respective positions (Meskell and Pels 2005) are also evident from the legacies they left in a country where the political stakes of arguments about culture were high. The arguments that Radcliffe-Brown, Hoernlé, and their students advanced laid the foundations for an anthropological critique of apartheid. They rejected the kind of analysis proposed in Malinowski's posthumously published work, *The Dynamics of Culture Change* (1945). Malinowski argues that Africa comprises three orders of cultural reality—the African, Western, and transitional—that are related, yet subject to their own determinisms. Radcliffe-Brown and Hoernlé's students preferred to see southern Africa as an integral part of the modern world, comprising a single, socially interdependent field of inter-

action (Gluckman 1940, 1947). Despite the greater immediate gain of Malinowski's interventions, they bore prohibitive long-term costs. His commitment to the preservation of cultures aligned himself with later apologists for apartheid (Gordon 2007), and provided a language to legitimate the exclusion of Africans from centers of wealth and power. In South Africa separation was never equal. By the mid-1970s, Africans still owned no more than 13 percent of the country's land, and the government spent only R 71 per capita on the schooling of an African child, but R 724 on a white child (SAIRR 1980: 450).

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## Notes

1. This ethical guideline is contentious, especially when anthropologists study wealthy and powerful social actors. Not all scholars are content with protecting the interests of actors such as landlords or police engaged in exploitative and/or coercive practices. The ethical guidelines do not specify which concerns of which participants.

2. In 1920 Alfred Brown added his mother's surname to become Radcliffe-Brown (Schapera 1989). I use the latter surname throughout this article to avoid confusion.
3. Letter, A. C. Haddon to Jan Smuts, 16 April 1920, Haddon Papers, Cambridge University Manuscripts Library.
4. *Cape Times*, 25 August 1921, reprinted in Gordon (1990: 40).
5. Letter, A. Radcliffe-Brown to W. Norton, 4 May 1922, Norton Papers, African Studies Collection, Jagger Library, University of Cape Town.
6. *Malume*, the indigenous term for "mother's brother," is based on the stem *ma* (mother); whereas *rarana*, the term for "father's sister," is based on the stem *ra* (father).
7. Letter, A. Radcliffe-Brown to W. Norton, 4 May 1922.
8. *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 October 1920.
9. *Cape Times*, 5 June 1921.
10. *Cape Times*, 16 March 1922; *The Argus*, 14 March 1922.
11. *Cape Times*, 17 April 1924.
12. *Cape Times*, 11 February 1925; *Cape Times*, 12 February 1925; *Cape Times*, 17 February 1925.
13. *Cape Times*, 24 March 1924.
14. Letter, M. Welsch, Umtata, to A. Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes Papers, Cambridge University Manuscripts Library, Ms.Add 8405/1/54/1-24.
15. *Cape Times*, 22 December 1922.
16. Letter, A. Radcliffe-Brown to A. Haddon, 23 October 1923, Haddon Papers, Cambridge University Manuscripts Library, envelope 8.
17. Letter, B. Malinowski to M. Fortes, 11 March 1936, Fortes Papers, ADD 8405/1/45/6, Cambridge University Manuscripts Library.
18. Letter, B. Malinowski to E. Masson, 17 July 1934 (Wayne 1995: 194).
19. Letter, B. Malinowski to E. Masson, 2 August 1934 (Wayne 1995: 196).
20. Letter, B. Malinowski to E. Masson, 24 July 1934 (Wayne 1995: 193).
21. *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 July 1934.
22. *Cape Argus*, 9 July 1934; *Die Burger*, 10 July 1934.
23. *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 July 1935.
24. *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 July 1924.
25. *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 July 1924.
26. Letter, E. G. Malherbe to B. Malinowski, 3 August 1934, Malinowski Papers, LSE Manuscripts Library.

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