

SPECIAL SECTION ON POLISH ANTHROPOLOGY

5: Review Article

THE MALINOWSKI CENTENARY

CONFERENCE: CRACOW 1984

GRAŻYNA KUBICA and JANUSZ MUCHA (eds.), *Między Dwoma Światami - Bronisław Malinowski* [Between Two Worlds: Bronislaw Malinowski], Warszawa and Kraków: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowa 1985. 195pp., English summaries.

This book contains the speeches and papers delivered at the Malinowski Centenary Conference held in Cracow in September 1984 under the auspices of the Jagiellonian University, where Malinowski once studied. It was one of four conferences held that year to mark the occasion, the others being in London in April, New Haven in October, and Florence in November. For several reasons, the Cracow conference may have been the most significant. Effectively for the first time, Polish academia publicly embraced Malinowski as a long-lost national hero. It also marked the first real entry of Polish anthropologists into the international academic arena. Considering the political situation in Poland, it is not surprising that they had to wait for such an event of international importance and then use Malinowski as a national symbol in order to establish an academic dialogue with the West. Subsequent contact between Oxford and Cracow anthropologists has been particularly constructive, especially since the establishment of the 'Polish Hospitality Scheme', which has made it possible for Polish anthropologists - as well as other scholars from Poland - to visit Oxford University on a short-term basis. In September 1985 the Jagiellonian University hosted another international conference, on the subject of 'Ritual: Sacred and Secular'; a forthcoming conference, to be held in January 1987, is to be on 'Identity'.

The following papers were delivered at the conference: 'Malinowski in the History of Social Anthropology', by Raymond Firth (who was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Jagiellonian University); 'From Malinowski to Merton: A Case Study in the Transmission of Ideas', by Piotr Sztompka; 'Malinowski and the Development of Polish Sociology', by Jerzy Szacki; 'Bronisław Malinowski's Polish Youth' by Grażyna Kubica; 'Bronislaw Malinowski's Idea of Culture', by Andrzej Paluch; 'Krakow Philosophy at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century and the Development of Malinowski's Sci-

entific Ideas', by Andrzej Flis; 'Polish Modernism and Malinowski's Personality', by Jan Jerschina; and 'Malinowski and the Problems of Contemporary Civilization', by Janusz Mucha.

From this list it is possible to deduce that the emphasis at the conference was on Malinowski's Polish social and domestic background and the formative philosophical, literary and artistic influences on his work and ideas. The connecting thread running through the papers seems to be an apology for not having wholeheartedly embraced Malinowski sooner - which in itself provides a statement about the political situation in Poland which made it impossible previously.

Kubica's paper (an English translation of which is reprinted in this issue of *JASO*) adds more fully to the biographical material now available about Malinowski's upbringing and early student career in Poland. She identifies four main influences which significantly shaped his personality: the domestic intellectual atmosphere, his studies at the Jagiellonian University, the influence of some men of knowledge, and his personal friendships.

Flis points to three main characteristics of philosophy at the turn of the century which must have had an impact on Malinowski's philosophical research when he was a doctoral student: a concern with historical research in Greek philosophy combined with modern contemporary European and Polish philosophy; the development of epistemology and the philosophy of science; and an interest in the belief systems of the Far East. The three teachers who exerted most influence on his ideas were Maurycy Straszewski, Stefan Pawlicki and Wladyslaw Heinrich, all followers of positivism and empirio-criticism. However, it was the work of Ernest Mach in particular which had a profound influence on Malinowski's theory of culture.

Jerschina, while not contradicting Flis, considers the influence of Polish modernism on Malinowski, his personality and ideas. He concludes that of the two intellectual trends prevailing in Poland at the turn of the century, positivism and modernism, it was in fact the latter which exercised the greater influence. Whereas positivism gave Malinowski reasons to take an anti-Hegelian stance, it was modernism and its romantic heritage which had most effect on his understanding of the historical process. Modernism's characteristic concern with the origin of culture, details of folk and national culture, and its expression in art and aesthetics all had their influence on Malinowski's ethnographic work. Similarly, biologism, the emphasis on man's dependence on nature, as well as self-analysis with respect to sex and eroticism, are all evident concerns of Malinowski, as witnessed in his fieldwork diaries. Elements of the modernist emphasis on individualism are also easily observable in his diaries. Understood without an appreciation of modernism's concern with objectifying feeling with respect to creating an understanding of life and a sense of being, they appear as evidence of egotism and exhibitionism. The cult of introspection and self-analysis should be seen more as a means towards creating an uninhibited state of being and as generating unconstrained expression. Other characteristics of modernism - an interest in religion, secret knowledge and magic

as well as humanism, democratism and patriotism - all found their mark in Malinowski's work.

Szacki addresses himself to the question of why Malinowski did not make an impact on Polish sociology even though his work was known in Poland (*The Sexual Life of Savages* and *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* had been translated in 1938 and 1939 respectively.) There are a number of reasons why this was so. Polish sociologists of the inter-war period were interested above all in the development of the nation state and the relation to it and participation in it by peasants. Thus, unlike Malinowski, they were interested in peasants rather than 'primitives', in the process of social disintegration and reorganisation rather than in static cultures and their functions, in the newness and separateness of society rather than in its similarities to other societies. Malinowski's *The Dynamics of Culture Change* (1946) did, it is true, address these problems, and his *Freedom and Civilization* (1947) did bring him closer to Polish sociologists, but they were published too late to have any impact. During the Stalinist era, after the Second World War, there was no sociology in Poland. After 1956 it was dominated by Marxism and American empirical sociology, and there is a big gap between Malinowski and Merton and Parsons. The work of Florian Znaniecki (*The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, written with W.I. Thomas) had a much more receptive audience and a far greater impact in Poland than any of Malinowski's work.

Sztompka considers the gap between Malinowski's functionalism, now refuted by generations of social scientists, and the structural-functionalist school of sociology developed by Robert K. Merton. In a similar vein, Paluch addresses himself to the concept of culture developed by Malinowski. While it had great relevance to the development of anthropological theory as well as being the basic component of Malinowski's still appreciated empirical work, it has lost its theoretical impact on the social sciences, much as his theory of functionalism has. Mucha analyses Malinowski's ideas concerning applied anthropology, the problems of war and totalitarianism, and the perspectives of a new civilization of peace and freedom - a subject close to the heart of every Pole.

Mention should also be made of Raymond Firth's paper, in which he presents an intellectual portrait of Malinowski, evaluating his ethnographic fieldwork and anthropological theories as well as presenting the main issues discussed by his pupils and subsequent generations of social anthropologists.

Also of interest in the book is the appendix by Tomasz Grabowski entitled 'Students of Sociology at the Jagiellonian University in Relation to Social Anthropology', in which the status and form of the teaching of social anthropology in Poland are discussed. We learn that prior to the 1970s, social anthropology was taught within the institutional framework of sociological and ethnographic studies. In the 1970s, a separate department for social anthropology was opened within the Institute of Sociology at the Jagiellonian University. Social anthropology is now a compulsory course for third-year sociology students. Certain guidelines have been drawn for future social anthropological re-

search and consideration. They include the need for a familiarisation with the vocabulary and all the branch subjects of social anthropology; the formation of theories of culture outside sociology; the study of preliterate societies and the establishment of the value of social anthropology in the study of modern societies; and the placing of Malinowski firmly in his proper position in the development of social anthropology, 'knowing that apart from astronomy, there is no other discipline which owes so much to a Polish scholar'. A current project of the University is the study of a community of Jews in Cracow: its traditional life, cultural forms, religious rituals and level of assimilation in Polish culture.

It can only be regretted that this book was published in Polish, thus resulting in a restricted readership (all the more so since the papers at the conference were all delivered in English - perhaps an English edition is forthcoming?). Mention should also be made of another book published in Poland last year which in part fulfils the last of the guidelines mentioned above, namely *Antropologia Społeczna Bronisława Malinowskiego* [The Anthropology of Bronislaw Malinowski], edited by Mariol Flis and Andrzej Paluch (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe 1985). It is a collection of articles by Polish sociologists and anthropologists divided into two parts: 'The Genesis and Meaning of B. Malinowski's Anthropology' and 'Major Problems of B. Malinowski's Anthropology'.

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