

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AT OXFORD

Introduction

These notes may be of interest to past, present and future students at the Institute of Social Anthropology. Further details will be found in the following articles and memoranda, from which most of the facts cited have been taken:

1. E.E. Evans-Pritchard 'The Institute of Social Anthropology', The Oxford Magazine, April 26, 1951.
2. 'The Teaching of Social Anthropology at Oxford', Man, 1959, 180.
3. Anthropology at Oxford, Holywell Press, 1953.
Memorandum to the General Board on 'the Professorship of Social Anthropology' submitted by representatives of the Faculty Board of Anthropology and Geography, 1969.
4. Proposed new Honour School of Anthropology: Communication from the General Board, 1949.

Position in the university.

Without going into the complicated structure of the university - Convocation, Congregation, General Board and all that - this note should suffice. When Tylor lectured he presumably did so (as Keeper of the University Museum) to the few who were interested enough to attend, mostly ladies. When Marett became Reader in Social Anthropology in 1910 I suppose he lectured in that capacity to those who registered for the Diploma in Anthropology, the University having given its recognition of the existence of the subject by the setting up of the Diploma in 1905 (the first examination was held in the academic year 1907-08) under a Committee for Anthropology. This was the first course in Anthropology in a British university. In 1914 Social Anthropology was recognized as 'the Department of Social Anthropology' with administrative and financial autonomy. Radcliffe-Brown changed, I think to no purpose, its title to 'the Institute of Social Anthropology' by so heading its notepaper. So we are an Institute in name, but I suppose that we are in reality a Department of the Faculty of Anthropology and Geography.

In 1938 the Committee for Anthropology and the Board of Studies for Geography (together with the Committee for Geography) were joined together to form a new Faculty, the Faculty of Anthropology and Geography. This seems to have been done for administrative convenience rather than for academic reasons, for the only academic association has been that Ethnology is an optional paper in the Geography Preliminary Examination. Although we are numerically one of the largest 'schools' in the University, Social Anthropology has a very modest representation on the Faculty Board: one statutory member (the Professor) and one elected, in effect nominated, member. This is because Ethnology, Physical Anthropology (Human Biology) and Archaeology count as 'Anthropology' since they were grouped together with Social Anthropology in the old Diploma in Anthropology.

One or the other of our two representatives on the Board, or both, is, or are, on the Applications Committee of the Board which meets before the Board sits and advises the Board on admissions and on the appointment of examiners.

There are two Sub-Faculties of the Faculty, those of Anthropology and Geography, and everybody teaching the one or the other subject ('Anthropology' in the sense as given above) belongs to the respective Sub-Faculty. These are primarily consultative Bodies to which the Board refers certain matters for consideration and guidance; though I suppose that there is nothing to prevent a Sub-Faculty initiating a discussion on any matter. Normally the Sub-Faculty of Anthropology meets once a term.

Since 1969 student consultative committees have been set up for the four component departments of the Sub-Faculty of Anthropology. The committee for social anthropology at present includes three research students at the Institute, elected by their fellow students, and representatives of this committee attend meetings of the Sub-Faculty for the discussion of curricular and other matters relating to the running of the Institute.

Accommodation

Tylor taught at the Pitt-Rivers Museum. Marett taught first at Exeter College and then from 1914 in the adjacent 'Barnett House' at the corner of the Broad and the Turl. In 1922 he moved the Department across the Broad to 'Acland House', a building next to Blackwell's bookshop. It was there that I joined it. Then in 1937, when 'Acland House' was pulled down in the demolitions to make room for the New Bodleian, we were housed with the School of Geography at the corner of Mansfield and Jowett Walk. The Geographers soon needed the whole building for themselves and we were also cramped, so in 1948 we migrated once more, this time to Museum House, Tylor's old home, in South Parks Road. Museum House was pulled down in the academic year of 1951-52 to allow an extension for Inorganic Chemistry and we moved to 11 Keble Road, once the home of Spooner, the arch-enemy, according to Tylor of anthropology. By this time, however, staff and students had so increased in numbers that we had to ask for more space and in 1966 were allotted our present abode, 51 and 53 Banbury Road.

Teaching Staff

What is now known as Social Anthropology was taught at Oxford under the general title of Anthropology by Tylor from 1883. On his retirement in 1908 his work was continued by Marett (later Rector of Exeter College), who from 1910 held a University Readership in Social Anthropology. On his retirement a University Chair in Social Anthropology was instituted through the generosity of All Souls, to which College the Chair was attached. Radcliffe-Brown was elected to it in 1937. (He was absent in Brazil from 1942 to 1944). I succeeded him in 1946 and I vacate the Chair this year (1970). As far as social anthropology is concerned, Marett taught single-handed till I joined him in a rather insecure post of Research-Lecturer in African Sociology at a salary of £300 in 1935. When I was able to get out of the army in 1945 I took up a Readership at Cambridge for a year and Fortes took my place at Oxford with a Lectureship (and the personal title of Reader); so when I took the Chair the staff consisted of myself, Fortes and a Secretary-Librarian (Miss P.H. Puckle). In 1947 we were joined by Gluckman and in 1948 by Srinivas. In 1949 Gluckman was elected to the Chair at Manchester and was replaced by Peristiany. In 1949 R.G. Lienhardt was

appointed to a Lectureship in the Institute, both Srinivas' and his appointments being made by the Oriental Studies Board. In the same year, since it was no longer possible for one person to act as both secretary and Librarian we obtained the services of a part-time Librarian (Mrs M. Sloss). In 1950 Fortes was elected to the Chair at Cambridge and Steiner took his place. At the same time Miss Tew (now Professor Mary Douglas) was appointed to a Lectureship (under the then Committee for Colonial Studies). So in 1951 the staff were Evans-Pritchard, Peristiany, Srinivas, Lienhardt, Steiner and Tew.

In 1951 Srinivas left to take a Chair at the University of Baroda and Dumont took his place. Miss Tew also left (to get married) and Bohannan took her place. In 1953 we suffered a great loss in Steiner's death. His place was taken by Beattie. In 1955 Dumont resigned to take a Chair in Paris and Pocock took his place. In 1956 Bohannan left us to take a Chair in U.S.A. and was succeeded by Needhari. In 1961, after many years of devoted service to the Institute, Miss Puckle retired as secretary and was replaced by Miss Edmed, who left in the following year. Miss Allaway joined us as secretary to the Institute in 1962. In 1963 Peristiany resigned to take up the Directorship of the Social Sciences Centre in Athens. Ardener took his place. In the same year P.A. Lienhardt was appointed to a Faculty Lectureship in Middle Eastern Sociology (an appointment made jointly by the University and St. Antony's College) in which capacity he became a member of our Institute. After many years of notable service Mrs. Sloss resigned as librarian. In 1966 Pocock resigned to become Reader in Social Anthropology at the University of Sussex. Jain took his place. From that time to now the teaching staff has remained the same. Our present Librarian, Miss Anderson, joined us in 1968.

The Library

The library began with Tylor's personal collection of books presented in 1911 and added to by his widow in 1917. It has constantly been added to and the total library now comprises some 7,500 volumes. Included in this estimate is the Skeat collection of Indonesian books and manuscripts. There are valuable runs of many journals and a large number of off-prints and brochures based on the Solignac collection. The care and maintenance of a library of this size is too much for one librarian and we really need an assistant, or at any rate a part-time assistant librarian. As befits a largely research Institute, the books are all on open shelves and we have sustained losses. It is difficult to know how these can be avoided without detriment to research. On the whole the Tylor Library, and the Balfour Library of the Pitt Rivers Museum supplement rather than duplicate each other.

Number of Students

Before the second European war there were never more than about 10 students, and often fewer than ten. A few figures will show how considerably the number has increased since. For the years 1946 to 1951 there was an average annual total of just under 43. Between 1946 and 1958 the annual average of students who sat for the Diploma in Anthropology was 8, for the degree of B. Litt. and B.Sc. 18, and for the degree of D. Phil. 15, giving a total average of 42 (excluding 'recognized students'). During the period 1961 to 1968 there were 185 candidates for the Diploma. Since 1949 143 students at the Institute have been awarded the degree of B. Litt. or B.Sc., and during the same period 83 dissertations for the degree of D. Phil. have been successfully submitted. I should add that it is not just that the number of students has increased but that, in my estimation, their intellectual and scholarly standard has, on the whole, risen also.

For various reasons the University has had to restrict its intake of students, and Boards, Colleges and Institutes (like ours) have been told that they may not take in more students than the quota allotted to them. We have about a 30 intake, though we can go up to 36. As it is very exceptional for us to permit a new student to register for a B.Litt. (or B.Sc.) or D. Phil. without having first taken the Diploma this means that the quota is more or less for the Diploma.

Distribution of Students

Having in mind that we should contribute not only to Oxford but also to scholarship in a wider world we have always welcomed students from foreign countries and a fair number have come to us from Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The provenance of candidates for the Diploma in Social Anthropology in the years 1961 - 1968 was Oxford 45; other British Universities 44; U.S.A. 39; other Overseas Universities 46; others mainly total 185. The 45 who took their degrees at Oxford were from the humanities or semi-humanities, and this has been the case since the Diploma was first instituted.

Courses and degrees

We are a postgraduate department, so all students who come to us have already a degree in one or other subject. We advise all students, whatever their academic background, to take the Diploma in Social Anthropology - a year's course (though occasionally a man will take two years over it). Some stop at this point. Others spend a second year in working for the degree of B.Litt. or B.Sc., (our Board permits a man to work for either) from literary sources, and this is so common that we are inclined to regard the Diploma year and the B.Litt. (or B.Sc.) year as a single two year course. The B.Litt. requirements are a thesis and a written paper based on the thesis. Those who wish to continue, with the intention of making a career in social anthropology, then work for a D. Phil. degree, usually based on field-research, which generally entails 2 years in the field and a further year for writing a thesis for the Doctorship. Thus a professional training takes about 5 years. From time to time we have what are called 'Recognized Students'. These are persons of senior status who reside in the university for a short time and are not registered for a degree but are permitted to attend lectures, use libraries, and so forth, as though they were.

Taylor had tried to get a degree examination for anthropology but his project was rejected by the University, much to his chagrin. I and others spent four years in drawing up a syllabus for an Honour School, but in 1949 the proposal was rejected again, this time almost nen. con. by the General Board. I must confess that I was much relieved when it was turned down. I believe that we are the best, and best-known, postgraduate school in the world and I think we can be happy if we can remain so. It is possible that the new Honour School in the Human Sciences will develop into something like a School of Anthropology. It is well, however, that we are going to participate in it without loss of our autonomy.

Diplomas

Until recently the Diploma was a combined course of Social Anthropology with Physical Anthropology, Ethnology, Comparative Technology and Prehistoric Archaeology. The examination papers were however heavily weighted in favour of Social Anthropology (three papers on Social Anthropology, one general paper on all subjects, a prescribed area paper

(mainly Social Anthropology), an essay, a practical (in technology) and a viva voce); and the great majority of students have almost always been primarily interested in that subject. As each and all of these subjects expanded it became obvious that they could not continue to be combined in a one year's Diploma course save on a very superficial level. So in 1965 we were split up, though still under the general title of 'Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology', into four separate Diplomas: Human Biology, Prehistoric Archaeology, Ethnology and Social Anthropology. This was not entirely what we wanted but it was all that could be obtained at the time and was a move in the right direction.

The papers in the Social Anthropology Diploma examination now are: (1) History, Theory and Relation to other Disciplines, (2) Ecology, Economics and Technology, (3) Kinship, Descent and Marriage, (4) Political and Jural Relations, (5) Ritual and Symbolism, (6) Prescribed Area or Topic, (7) Essay. There is also a viva voce.

Supervision

The Institute practises the tutorial system traditional in the university, that is to say that each of the Diploma students writes an essay for his 'tutor' (now called his 'supervisor') once a week and receives individual instruction in what used to be called a 'private hour'. The teaching staff have always divided up the Diploma students between them, and since the load of teaching is heavy (added to by one of the staff being usually absent in a sabbatical year) the Professor has taken his share of instruction. Each tutor decides for himself what lectures he shall advertise in the University Gazette. There is no attempt at planning, but it works out that we more or less cover the Diploma topics. During the first two terms seminars are held, and we usually get anthropologists from outside to give the papers. B.Litt., B.Sc., and D. Phil. students receive such guidance as they require and ask for, on their reading and in the writing of theses for examination. They are divided among the teaching staff in accordance with their special interests.

Scholarships

We are not very well off for these. The oldest is the Coltart Scholarship in Anthropology which is in the gift of Exeter College, of which the successful candidate becomes a member. It is awarded for a year in the first instance but can be extended. It is worth about £150. The Bagby Bequest, which comes under the Faculty Board, is for research in urban, literate cultures in accordance with anthropological principles and methods. It is worth about £750 a year and is renewable up to three years in all. Lastly, the Iona Evans-Pritchard Scholarship is (in consultation with the Professor of Social Anthropology) in the gift of St. Anne's College. It is for a woman conducting research in the field of African studies and working for an Oxford degree, and it is at present advertised at £400 a year, and like the other scholarships is renewable. The only other university resource we have to help a student is our Graduate Assistantship worth £500 a year. This post in the Institute requires certain duties to be performed, but may be regarded more or less as a scholarship.

Another scholarship (worth about £3,000) which should be mentioned here is the Swan Fellowship awarded by the Curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum in consultation with the Professor of Social Anthropology and the Reader in Physical Anthropology, for Studies in connexion with the Batwa, which is to say for research among the pygmy and pigmoid peoples. Since this scholarship was accepted by the University in 1955 it has been given to ethno-archaeologists and not to students of existing peoples.

The Social Science Research Council has ten subject committees, one of which is for social anthropology. Candidates for the Diploma and the B.Litt. are eligible for quota and pool awards. In 1968 twelve awards were made but only ten were taken up, In 1969 eleven awards were made.

Publications

The only official University series (coming under the direction of the Faculty Board) is Oxford Monographs on Social Anthropology. This was started in 1957 and is restricted to theses of unusual merit. So far six volumes have been published and there are a number awaiting publication. What might be called a semi-official series, since it is published by the Clarendon (University) Press, and is in effect run by our Institute, is the Oxford Library of African Literature. The first volume in the series was published in 1964; 15 volumes have since appeared. There are others on their way. I might add that though there is no direct institutional relationship between the Institute of Social Anthropology and the Clarendon Press there has always been a close personal relationship between members of the Institute and the Press, both as publishers and as friends. Under this heading I must also mention the recent venture of some of our students, the Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford. It should also be mentioned that the Professor began in the academic year of 1946-47 to submit to the University a brief annual report on the activities of the Institute and this is now expected of him and is published at the end of Trinity Term in the University Gazette.

Relations with other disciplines

I think I may say that we are now, after some strained periods, on good terms, both academic and personal, with our colleagues at the Pitt Rivers Museum (Ethnology and Prehistoric Archaeology). Co-operation might be closer if the Museum had a new building in which it could display its magnificent collections to better purpose. We are also on good terms with the Professor of Race Relations and the Reader in Physical Anthropology, and also with our colleagues at the School of Geography.

Our Institute and its members have a long record of co-operation with other humane disciplines, and several of us have supervised postgraduate students working under the direction of other Boards, e.g. Theology, Litt. Hum., History and Social Studies. In the past we had much to do with the teaching of Cadets and Officers in the Sudan and Colonial Services. This stream has dried up, but something perhaps more important has taken its place. Social Anthropology is a compulsory paper in the B. Phil. in Indian Studies. It is a scheduled subject in the B.Phil. in Latin-American Studies. In the proposals for the B.Phil. in Modern South Asian Studies the schedule of subjects includes Social Anthropology. Social Anthropology is a subject in the schedule of the proposed B.Phil. in African Studies. As earlier mentioned it will also participate in the new Honour School in the Human Sciences.

Lectures

The Frazer Lecture on some social anthropology subject is delivered at Oxford every four years (at Cambridge, Glasgow and Liverpool in the other years). The Vice-Chancellor has always consulted me, in effect asked me, to nominate the Lecturer. The Marett Lecture on some social anthropology subject is delivered at Exeter College every third year (in the intervening years it is delivered on a philosophical or archaeological subject). I have usually been consulted by the Rector of the College. The annual Myres Memorial Lecture is given in rotation on a subject within the field of ancient history, European and Near Eastern archaeology, historical geography and ethnology, with special reference to

Mediterranean lands. The lecture is delivered every other year. I suppose that a social anthropologist could be invited to lecture under the title of 'ethnology' but so far no one has been asked to do so. The Professor is not ex-officio a member of the Board of Management, though he, or any of his colleagues, could be appointed by the Faculty Board to serve on it, as the Faculty Board nominates two of its members.

Stipendary Fellowships and Hon. Degrees

All Souls College now advertises each year Visiting Fellowships for a year or six months, as those selected wish. The Professor, as a Fellow of the College, may put forward a name, but the competition is severe. There is no restriction with regard to nationality. So far the only social anthropologist to have been appointed is Prof. Fred Eggan (1970). The College also from time to time advertises Research Fellowships and one of the subjects listed in the advertisement is social anthropology. So far no social anthropologist has been awarded one of these Fellowships. Other colleges sometimes advertise Research Fellowships for which an anthropologist might be eligible. The advertisements appear in the University Gazette (and sometimes elsewhere). Four such appointments have recently been made (at St. Catherine's, St. Hugh's, New College and Merton). Council decides who are to be given Hon. degrees. So far the only social anthropologist who has been honoured is Prof. Claude Lévi-Strauss. These degrees are sparingly given and any proposal has to be strongly backed

Extra-Institute Activities

Closely associated with the Institute is the Oxford University Anthropological Society. It was formally constituted at a meeting in Exeter College in January 1909 and held its 500th meeting on Wednesday, 25th February, 1953. It is thus one of the oldest University societies. It holds about 10 meetings a year at which lectures are given. It has recently (Hilary Term, 1970) brought out the first number of the Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford, the editors of which are students at the Institute.

Appointments

All I have to say on this topic is that since I have taught at Oxford no student who endured the full course of his academic career has failed to obtain a good post in a department in a University, were he so minded. I think that these favourable circumstances still persist. During the past 20 years 179 students have been awarded post-graduate degrees in Social Anthropology. Of these, over 20 now hold appointments at full professorial level and well over a further 100 hold Readerships or Lectureships. Between them they have published more than 70 books, as well as innumerable articles, on a wide range of subjects in Social Anthropology.

E. E. Evans-Pritchard.