Has Anthropology a Future in Africa After Colonialism?

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Particularly in Africa, true or imagined connections between anthropology and colonialism have often led to a deep suspicion of the fruits of anthropological endeavour. It is appropriate to consider how far this suspicion is justified, and more generally whether anthropology has a role to play in Africa today. It will here be argued that anthropology has on the whole contributed to the development of the more positive kinds of images of African in the West; and that the contribution of this particular intellectual tradition remains important.

It is clear that the debate needs to be placed in the context of wider discussions about the future of anthropology as a discipline. Feelings of unease about the status of the discipline have come sometimes not from Third World critics, or from radical commentators, but also from senior practitioners within the anthropological establishment.[1] It is true that some of the problems are merely terminological. In its literal, etymological sense "anthropology" refers merely to the study of man. But such a study is spanned by a large number of academic disciplines. The notion of the anthropologist as a generalist was common in the nineteenth century, but with greater specialisation it is now far less significant. But even this broader conception is not totally dead, and its revival has occasionally been advocated as a way out of some difficulties experienced at present.[2]   More commonly, however, the older general anthropology is split between the biological and the social sciences. Thus the more relevant question is whether there is any continued justification for social anthropology as an independent discipline.

Many have felt that the status of such a specialism is insecure, and there are also considerable differences in approach between various schools of social anthropology. Thus in France, Levi-Strauss describes his own activity as social anthropology, but his 'structural anthropology' has many important preoccupations which are not shared by practitioners in Britain.   Yet some British social anthropologists have seen Levi-Straussian structuralism as a way out of certain difficulties encountered in further development of the 'discipline'. This can be seen to be true of both orthodox figures in the anthropological establishment, and of radical critics of existing work.   But the possibility remains that some critics object more to a particular word than to the activities carried out under such a name.

In order to simplify the problem, it is here proposed to concentrate on British

social anthropology. This forms a fairly coherent whole; it tended in its classic period to pay particular attention to Africa, and the link is most easily explored in relation to one type of colonialism. It is proposed firstly to examine the traditional and more recent preoccupations of British social anthropologists; secondly, to consider the evidence for links with colonialism; thirdly, to assess radical criticisms; and fourthly, to see what response to this debate would be appropriate in the context of modern African scholarship.

The classic period of British social anthropology can be said to have been dominated by two major scholars: Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) and Malinowski (1884-1942). The former is best known as a theoretician, the latter as a fieldworker, though each had somewhat unsuccessful forays into the other's terrain.[4] Some earlier writers wrote in an evolutionary tradition, but the bulk of their work was discarded by the mainstream of twentieth-century scholars. Malinowski was concerned to move away from evolutionary approaches and unsystematic comparison, and to concentrate upon intensive field studies. Radcliffe-Brown's chief interest was to build up a 'natural science of society', in which field studies could be seen as being like laboratory experiments. This method he saw as producing a scientific basis for the discipline, which would be far superior to the 'conjectural history' of some of his predecessors. Both Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski were influenced by the French sociologists Durkheim, particularly in respect of his contribution to the functionalist perspective on society. Radcliffe-Brown saw 'social structure' as the key concept in his approach, but Malinowski preferred to speak of 'culture'. Radcliffe-Brown stressed the importance of analogies with the natural sciences, and also hoped for a comparative science. Malinowski did have some broader concerns, but did not put them in the forefront of his proposals for the discipline.

It can be said that the classic period of British social anthropology which was influenced by these two scholars had four basic characteristics. First, it involved for its practitioners at least one long period of fieldwork. This was carried out by the method of participant observation, that is by the involvement of the anthropologist in the daily round of activities of his informants. Secondly, some version of the functionalist perspective was adopted for the analysis of the material so collected. Thirdly, it tended to be holistic, and in particular, the field of study tended also to be the unit of personal observation. Fourthly, it was concerned with non-Western societies, and the value of the outsider's perception of an unfamiliar society was explicitly recognised. Africa was the continent particularly subjected to the British anthropologist's scrutiny.

The outcome of this exercise was the development of highly sophisticated

techniques of empirical investigation, and the publication of large amounts of data. There was some fairly low-level comparative work done. Typically this took place in seminars, where participants would help the newly-returned fieldworker to make sense of his data, often upon the basis of their own field experiences. There was usually lip-service paid to the importance of comparative study, but relatively little was done in practice. A good example of the low level of comparison is seen in the three collections *African Political Systems, African Systems of Kinship and Marriage, and African Worlds*.[5]

These (and many other volumes which succeeded them) consist merely of a general introductory essay followed by various case-studies. No further comparison is attempted in them. Some more ambitious comparative aims have been achieved, especially in the field of kinship studies; but many have been disappointed that more has not been done in this respect. One leading anthropologist, Evans-Pritchard, has urged that the aim of grandiose comparison should be abandoned. Drawing the analogy with history, he suggests that anthropologists see the general in particular.[6] But many have felt that at least some of the comparative potential should have been achieved. An influential opinion was expressed by Leach in his paper 'Rethinking Anthropology', first published in 1961.[7] Leach was influenced by Levi-Strausss. His aim was to discard some older preconceptions, especially with regard to the importance of descent in kinship theory. For many years the main area of anthropological debate remained that of kinship, which, as Fox has suggested, became established as a basic topic in anthropology which all practitioners had to master.[8]

Leach's interest in Levi-Strauss did not however stop with kinship. It began with Levi-Strauss's relatively orthodox studies on that subject,[9] but soon extended to a broader concern with the study of symbolism. This led to a growing interest in links with linguistics. Some have seen this area of study as a suitable distinctive province of the social anthropologist, but it has not proved universally popular.

To summarise so far, it can be seen that even *social* anthropology has never been a really closely-defined field of specialisation. There has been a central empiricist preoccupation, but the question of what exactly to do with the body of materials so collected has always been a matter for debate. However, radicals of various kinds have also paid attention in recent years to the question of the future of anthropology, and not surprisingly have drawn attention to the colonial context in which the discipline was developed. Too often sweeping assertions have been made. It is therefore particularly appropriate to undertake a close

examination of the complexities of the relationship between anthropology and colonialism.

One area of debate has been on the question of whether anthropology is in any case an activity which is opposed to radical modes of thinking, or whether on the contrary it can promote some kind of heterodox outlook. Some have suggested that, traditionally at any rate, British social anthropology has had a close relationship with the British establishment, values, and institutions.[10] Thus the broadly-based organisation for those in Britain who are interested in anthropology is called the *'Royal* Anthropological Institute'. By contrast, if anyone were to suggest royal patronage for a comparable association of sociologists, the idea would probably be greeted with laughter. Moreover, Prince Charles took anthropology as part of his degree course at Cambridge. The ancient English universities have extended a welcoming hand to social anthropology, but sociology there has only been relatively recently established, against some opposition. Some leading British social anthropologists have been knighted, but this has never been true in the case of sociologists. Of particular interest is the fact that anthropological research in Britain proliferated in the twentieth century, whereas sociological study was of only minor importance in Britain during the same period. For all these reasons, it might be argued that social anthropology fits fairly easily into orthodox values in Britain, whereas sociology has at least the potential for some kind of critical perspective. Such a view of the situation has obvious implications for the position of anthropology within the colonial context.

There are, however, certain factors which could encourage a rather different view of the effect of anthropology upon its practitioners. Particularly significant is the fact that the method of investigation advocated by Malinowski, and adopted as standard, was one which broke down orthodox patterns of segregation in the colonial period. The anthropologist was expected to 'come down from the veranda' and to participate in the daily round of activities of the people. In the colonial context, such activities broke a very important taboo. Race relations were characterised by segregation, and where Europeans and Africans met it was only in strictly formal contexts. The breaking of accepted practice in this regard, it has been argued by some, would inevitably have led to a sceptical attitude regarding other aspects of colonial practice.[11] The significance of this will later become apparent.

A second factor which could counterbalance the position of anthropology within the orthodox value-consensus is the fact that comparative study of societies is often appealed to as having a distinctive educational contribution. It

can lead to a perspective which sees nothing sacrosanct about the existing order of things, but which views them with potential scepticism as only one of a number of ways of organising social life. Comparative studies of this kind do not always have this effect on their practitioners, especially when a functionalist perspective has been adopted, but they are potentially capable of doing so.

Thirdly, it has been suggested that typically, British social anthropologists were somewhat marginal, at least, to the English establishment. They were likely to have some foreign connection, or to be Scottish, Welsh, Irish or Jewish. [12] Thus their positions in the orthodox value-consensus can be exaggerated.

Yet, while recognising that the assertion that anthropology is a colonial subject is an oversimplification, it cannot be denied that anthropologists have wanted to put their discipline at the service of the colonial administration. There has always been a tendency to justify the subject in practical as well as academic terms. Two related sources of this tendency can be identified. The first is the International African Institute, a collaborative body of missionaries, anthropologists and administrators. This was set up in 1926, and had the practical application of anthropology as one of its goals. It began the scholarly journal *Africa*, which still exists. The second source is the direct influence of Malinowski. Malinowski was constantly concerned to stress the value of anthropology in administration, and he wrote an influential article on the subject in 1929.[13] Here he suggested that the practical man should state problems to stimulate the anthropologist. He expressed support for the idea of Indirect Rule, though he urged that knowledge of indigenous culture was important for any kind of rule. It must be admitted that certain passages in this article scarcely indicate a critical attitude to colonial practice. For instance:

> Forced labour, conscription or voluntary labour contracts, and the difficulties of obtaining sufficient numbers - all these form another type of practical difficulties in the colonies. The chief trouble in all this is to entice the Native or persuade him to keep him satisfied while he works for the white man.[14]

However, he does make some important suggestions regarding a shift of emphasis in future anthropological research. He suggests that an antiquarian approach which concentrated upon the traditional elements to the neglect of the influence of other cultures would be inappropriate. This viewpoint is reaffirmed in his latter works, and comes to the forefront particularly in *The Dynamics of Culture Change*,[15] which appeared in 1945 (posthumously). In this work

Malinowski praised British colonialism in Africa. He claimed that it was sensitive to the interests of subjects, and adaptable. He acknowledged that colonisation was not a smooth process, but praised the ability of the British to learn from experience. He reaffirmed his support for Indirect Rule, and stressed the tenacity of indigenous customs in many important areas of life. He opposed the notion that Africa culturally was merely a *tabula rasa*. Although he claimed to support African interests, he either ignored the power relations of colonialism or at least appeared naive on the subject. He suggested for instance that there was nothing more needed for the prosperity of agriculture in South Africa than the balancing of budgets of the native and the farmer. He rejected a political role for the anthropologist, saying rather that he could only show the implications of policies.

It is important, however, not to take a one-sided view of Malinowski.[16] In his *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, [17] he condemns the disruptive influence of colonialism in the Trobriand Islands. It must also be remembered that he taught Jomo Kenyatta in London, and that he wrote the introduction to Kenyatta's work *Facing Mount Kenya*.[18] It is possible that he merely saw Indirect Rule as a better alternative to the French system of Direct Rule.

It can also be observed that Malinowski was not very enthusiastically received by colonial policy-makers. In particular, Sir Philip Mitchell, then Governor of Tanganyika, criticised Malinowski's ideas on practical anthropology in an article in Africa in 1930.[19] Mitchell did not oppose anthropology as such, but rather saw the purposes of the anthropologist and the administrator as different. He also saw anthropological research as too lengthy and ambitious for practical use. There is much similar evidence for the view that the Colonial Office tended to be lukewarm about anthropology.

Nonetheless, there is also some clear evidence of collaboration. This existed in various aspects, both direct and indirect. The most obvious instance of direct collaboration is found in the appointment of government anthropologists and sociologists. This was by no means a common phenomenon, but it did occur in Tanzania, Sudan and Nigeria. There were also cases of professional academic anthropologists who gave advice to governments, though such situations were far less common than was often supposed. Many anthropologists complained that they were not asked for advice, or that when they offered their advice it was ignored. More common was the situation in which academic anthropologists were sponsored by colonial funds.[20] In Britain, the Colonial Social Science Research Council was founded in 1944 (rather late in colonial history).

There was also an interesting case of direct encouragement of anthropological

research, by a colonial governor. This happened in Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) at the initiative of Sir Hubert Young. Through his encouragement, the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute was set up. There were also many less direct links. As the idea gained ground that colonial officials should receive better preparation for their duties, social anthropology began to be seen as an appropriate part of their training. Many colonial officials themselves were amateur anthropologists, but this was a rather different dimension. In this connection it should be remembered that the subject of anthropology encompassed a broad range of interest, professionally as well as academically. The Royal Anthropological Institute was open to anyone prepared to pay the subscription, and many missionaries and administrators were members. It was only in 1946 that, in response to a felt need to distinguish the professionals from the amateurs, the Association of Social Anthropologists was set up.[21]

It is only to be expected that colonial officials would want to glean information regarding the customs of their subjects, especially in a situation of Indirect Rule. Some of this they collected in their own fashion, while they also made use of published information which professional anthropologists had collected. But this is a far cry from saying that all anthropology had this purpose. Anthropology intended to serve academic interests could be used for purposes not intended by its practitioners. But it must also be remembered that even anthropology which was engaged in with practical aims in view was often criticised for its technical language, the length of its reports, and the length of time needed to collect and publish the information.[22]

The cases of more direct collaboration are perhaps worthy of closer examination. It has already been suggested that colonial governments made only spasmodic use of anthropologists on their own staffs. The anthropological profession often urged that more government anthropologists be appointed, but their advice was heeded only infrequently. They argued that government anthropologists would have better contacts with officials and would not have the same conflicts of loyalties that academic anthropologists might experience. Just after the Second World War there appeared to be a growth of interest in proposals to encourage government anthropologists. The academic anthropologists generally welcomed this but sometimes reservations were expressed. For instance, in 1946[23] Firth expressed concern about the kinds of pressures that were imposed upon anthropologists in such a situation. He deplored the expectation that Western values and colonial interests should be wholeheartedly endorsed by anthropologists.

There was, as already noted, spasmodic use of government anthropologists

in both Sudan and Nigeria. Tanzania is also an interesting case in point. Not only were 'government sociologists' appointed after the Second World War, but one of these, Gulliver, has written about his activities during this period.[24] He explains how he was asked to investigate specific questions, such as labour migration and succession procedures under traditional authorities. Gulliver suggests that colonial officials were often unclear as to what they wanted, but that they were quite responsive to suggestions. He shows that he was open about being a government employee in his dealings with informants; but that at the same time he kept his distance from other officials. He maintained confidentiality and refused to disseminate government information (though in the latter case officials put pressure on him to do this). He was known by his informants as the 'man of customs', and his lifestyle and non-authoritarian behaviour marked him off from other Europeans. He provided advice to officials and participated in decision-making with them; but he found that, by working closely with Africans, he became a spokesman for African interests, aspirations and expectations. He comments as to his own position as follows:

> It seemed to me in 1952, when I applied for the appointment in Tanganyika, that colonialism was the going regime and it seemed reasonable and attractive to try to work within it, to contribute towards amelioration and improvement and even, just a little, to hasten its end.[25]

He saw officials at this particular juncture in colonial rule as being by no means unintelligent or rigid in outlook; especially he saw them as being flexible if not put on the defensive by direct attack. He found himself accepted as a specialist provided that he remembered that others too had technical knowledge, and that there were financial constraints. He suggests that applied anthropology needed a benevolent environment, with freedom to investigate, willing listeners, and participation in policy. All these conditions he found satisfied in his work as a government sociologist.

Another rather different example of collaboration is found in the work of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. The aim of this was to assist on formulating policy in a community consisting of both Africans and non-Africans.[26] The government supported the scheme; the settler representatives, especially the mine management, were sceptical, seeing political power for themselves as the answer to any social problems. They did not however wish to offend the government, and for this reason subscribed to the Institute.

The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute was set up in 1937, and saw its work as quite different from any kind of antiquarian approach. Concern was to be with social relationships in a multi-ethnic environment, in which industrial towns had grown from almost nothing. Problems of urbanisation were examined, and the impact of labour migration in the rural areas was also considered. The aim was the practical one of influencing policy. Fairly short reports were produced, and they were intended for a relatively wide circulation. The practical policy-oriented approach was continued after 1941, when Max Gluckman became the Institute's director. Gluckman was sympathetic to Russian communism, and under his influence research plans were drawn up by analogy with 5-year plans in the Soviet Union.

Before long the activities of Institute staff were viewed with great hostility by the mine management, and generally by the 'unofficials' on the Legislative Council. Attempts were even made to close the Institute. Particular hostility was directed at the research method of participant observation. Since this breached conventional racial boundaries, it was seen as a considerable threat to white interests. The Institute was the subject of some scathing attacks in the *Central African Post*.[27] Some important research on labour migration and ethnic relations was done by the Institute, but it is significant that the 'practical' approach was gradually abandoned. Gluckman left in 1947, for Oxford, and in 1949 he became Professor of Social Anthropology at Manchester University. A more academic approach was thereafter adopted by the Institute, which became more of a field station for Manchester postgraduate students.

In most other respects, it can be said with confidence that the direct contribution of academic anthropologists to colonial rule was minimal. Occasional advice was given; anthropological literature had a fair amount of influence; and growing professionalisation in the colonial service led to the inclusion of anthropology in the preparatory training of officials. Thus it might be concluded that the extent of effective links between anthropology and colonialism can easily be exaggerated. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the discipline of anthropology developed in a period of history where the relationship between the anthropologist's own country and that of his informants was a colonial one.[28] It is only to be expected that a critical response will have emerged in the post-colonial situation, both from Western and Third World sources. This contribution to the debate will now be examined. It can be seen that critics have attacked different parts of the edifice, from different vantage points. It is useful, at least from an analytical point of view, to distinguish between those criticisms that are levelled from an academic standpoint, and those

which are more political or moral in orientation. The distinction is not absolute, and some contributors to the debate would decidedly reject it; but at least in the initial stages it may be helpful to try to make the distinction.[29]

One set of critics of the academic content of British social anthropology have drawn special attention to its *empiricist* approach. This was a common position adopted by contributors to the *New Left Review*. This current of thought was influenced particularly by an article by Anderson entitled 'Some Components of the National Culture'.[30] This is a general discussion of empiricism in English intellectual life. It argues that virtually any kind of sociology remained underdeveloped in England. Social anthropology was well developed, but its orientation was strongly empiricist. It is thus suggested that empiricism pervaded English culture, and that social anthropology was a characteristic feature of such an intellectual tradition. This argument was further developed in subsequent articles by Goddard.[31] These authors suggest that the empiricist tradition in British social anthropology had the tendency to absorb French contributions which adopted a different perspective. It is maintained that initially Durkheim, and later Levi-Strauss, were incorporated into the normal mainstream of English empiricism, and that in the course of this development some of their major insights became devalued.

Some might of course argue that this was not necessarily a bad thing. As already noted, Evans-Pritchard[33] simply saw social anthropology as analogous to history. He maintained that the historian was not a scientist, but that this did not exclude academic rigour. Evans-Pritchard urges that the aim of producing broad comparative schemes should be abandoned: the anthropologist, like the historian, would rather see the general in the particular. This standpoint has been criticised. Worsely, for instance, objects to the idea that an analogy with history means that anthropology cannot be considered to be a science.[34] However, the point about the relationship between the general and the particular seems quite valid. As long as fieldwork is seen as central to the anthropologist's task, the time left for serious comparative work may turn out to be severely limited.

After empiricism, functionalism tends to be the other main object of attack in *New Left Review*. A corollary of the criticism of functionalism is the argument that Marxist approaches have been neglected. The functionalist perspective has of course come under attack from radicals everywhere, and it is found in sociology as well as in social anthropology. The criticisms are well-known: viz, that what are in fact dominant values are disguised by the functionalist as shared values; that conflict is neglected as a social phenomenon; and that there is an overall conservative bias. The functionalist approach has

been popularised in social science generally through the work of Spencer and Durkheim. In American sociology, Parsons was the chief expositor of functionalism, and the functionalist approach became characteristic. In British social anthropology the work of Radcliff-Brown and Malinowski was particularly relevant. They had different approaches to functionalism, but their combined influence ensured that functionalism and social anthropology became closely identified with one another.

In British *sociology*, however, functionalism never became totally identified with the discipline. Some have moreover argued that the functionalist approach is appropriate to anthropology even though this might not be the case for sociology. Thus it is maintained that small-scale societies which tend to be studied by anthropologists can be more appropriately viewed in functionalist terms. Such societies, for instance, might have shared values in a way that large-scale industrial capitalism does not. It is further suggested that in small-scale societies of this nature there is a lack of perception of alternatives to the existing order of things. Gluckman is particularly concerned to stress that in such societies there are rebellions rather than revolutions.[35] There can be opposition to and possible deposition of a particular incumbent of an office, but not opposition to the existence of that office as such. Thus an unsatisfactory chief might be deposed but only to be replaced by another chief of the same type. Correspondingly, Gluckman sees functionalism as being able to handle conflict in societies of this type. Conflict at one level can produce cohesion at a higher level.

Some might however argue that rather than being merely a conservative orientation, functionalism provided a legitimate defence of small-scale societies against accusations of prelogicality. Functionalism could be seen as opposed to the view that Western culture was obviously superior to that of other peoples. Despite certain of his statements and some of the terminology that he used, there is some justification for putting Malinowski in this category. It has even been suggested that he was so concerned to defend Trobriand culture against its potential critics that he fell victim to the 'postulate of indispensability'; he believed that only certain activities could fulfil certain functions whereas functionalists such as Merton would argue that functional alternatives were possible in such cases.

A corollary of the use of the functional approach might be said to be a lack of interest in Marxism. It is recognised that there were certain exceptions to this. Particularly noteworthy is Worsely's reanalysis of Tallensi kinship, which maintains that economic rather than ideological factors are of primary

importance.[37] However, it has already been noted that Gluckman's concerns were strongly influenced by the Marxist perspective. He stressed that the absence of forces for revolutionary change was a characteristic only of certain kinds of society. Worsely and Gluckman were both at Manchecter, and others at that university were well informed in Marx's writings.[38] However, some would go on to suggest that Marx's comments on pre-capitalist societies did not count among his central preoccupations. It is true that Marx's discussion of pre-capitalist formations has only relatively recently come to light. But in view of the evidence for this area of Marx's concern, Bloch has suggested that anthropology vied with history as a major interest towards the end of Marx's life.[39] Marx, apparently, was particularly attracted by the fact that the comparative dimension which anthropology provided showed that there was nothing sacrosanct about capitalism; alternatives were to be seen to be possible.

Apart from the various arguments surrounding functionalism, the commonest objection made by radicals to the academic content of anthropology is that the wider context has been ignored. This normally refers particularly to the colonial situation. The argument is usually linked with statements about true and imagined connections of anthropologists with the colonial governments and sometimes with criticisms of microscopic studies in general. To take the argument in respect of the colonial context first, it has to be admitted that this often has a certain measure of validity. Following the Malinowskian bid to come down from the veranda, anthropologists naturally gravitated away, at least initially, from those parts of the societies studied that had been influenced by contact with Western culture, and concentrated rather on what they could find of the 'traditional' situation. The methodological importance of fieldwork was emphasised, with all other sources of data being seen as of only marginal interest. Moreover much contemporary documentation lying in colonial files will have been classified as confidential, and the anthropologist would have been unlikely to obtain privileged access to it. The functionalist perspective might also have been difficult to apply in a manner which could acknowledge the colonial presence; in particular, functionalism is frequently ahistorical.

This kind of criticism cannot however be laid at the door of all anthropologists. Malinowski himself in his 1929 article already cited argued that the need existed for a change of direction away from the antiquarian approach. In his later work he advocated the study of 'culture contact'. Malinowski's lead in this respect has been followed by many others. The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and the Manchester School have already been mentioned. Though Gluckman was very hostile to the method of study of culture contact that

Malinowski advocated,[40] he was very favourable to studying such phenomena. It can be suggested, therefore, that the anthropological profession eventually corrected itself in respect of the problem of neglect of the colonial situation.

A related problem is perhaps more serious. Some have raised objections not merely to anthropology in the various ways in which it is practised, but also to any kind of attempt to study local social systems. Microscopic studies are seen by such critics as distracting attention from the real forces that are operating. This criticism is likely to be expressed particularly by those who advocate dependency theories in their extreme form. The argument would be that it is not just a matter of placing the study in a broader context. Rather it would be suggested that the local social system is irrelevant, since global forces are the determining factors and accordingly they should be concentrated upon exclusively. Since in such a view the metropolis is the source of major structural change, a close examination of the microscopic situation would at best be a distraction from the real issues at stage. If this perspective is to be accepted totally, then the critics of anthropology are probably right. However, not all would accept such an extreme position, even if they favour dependency theories.[41] Many would grant the satellite at least some role to play in initiation of social change. In an assessment of the problem of doing anthropology in urban Zambia, Epstein (a member of the Manchester school) concludes that:

> While the social life of local communities is being continuously moulded and affected by external factors, the social structure of these communities is also important in determining how these external factors will be received.[42]

It is now appropriate to turn to the criticisms of a political or moral nature. These are much more complex and intractable, and their status is less easy to determine. Basically they can be reduced to two propositions. The first maintains that inappropriate political standpoints on the part of anthropologists led to inappropriate scholarly conclusions. The second is that the political standpoints on the parts of anthropologists led to inappropriately close relationships with the colonial government.

Much of relevance to the first proposition has already been covered and does not require repetition. The view here taken is that microscopic studies are perfectly in order provided that one retains an awareness of the broader context. The second matter is more difficult since it involves rather awkward speculation about what anthropologists 'should have done' about the colonial situation. It must be remembered that, whatever else they might have wanted to do, they

wanted to get on with their anthropology.[43] Not only under colonialism, but in any political set-up in the world (including post-independence Africa), some kind of *modus vivendi* with the legally-constituted authorities is likely to be needed if one is embarking upon field research. Where large funds are required, and sponsors have to be sought, it is very right and proper that the motives of sponsors should be scrutinised and that possible unintended consequences of the research findings should be anticipated. This is true in respect of relationships with sponsors in any historical situation. But acceptance of money from sponsors does not necessarily imply acceptance of the sponsors' assumptions. It would indeed be most inappropriate to accept funds where the results of the research were likely to lead to policies working clearly against the interests of informants, or where the investigator would be forced to falsify conclusions. But the evidence about classical British anthropology is that colonial authorities showed little interest in detailed presentation of findings; that anthropologists where consulted by colonial authorities were most likely to be spokesmen for their informants; and that there were no pressures to falsify their findings.

It is true, no doubt, that occasionally a District Officer would have been saved from the task of collecting some details about indigenous social structure himself because anthropological publications already supplied this information. But this has to be counterbalanced by other considerations. Before classic social anthropology began, nearly all of the literature on Africa which had been written by Europeans was highly prejudiced and ethnocentric. But anthropologists were at least determined to make the attempt to curb Western ethnocentrism, by showing non-European societies as coherent, functioning wholes. Nobody suggests that anthropologists succeeded perfectly in discarding their ethno-centrism; but whereas in most other Western circles, ethnocentric bias would be seen as normal, even praiseworthy, anthropologists would see such bias as a source of error. It may therefore be suggested that there was a gradual process of self-correction for ethnocentrism in the anthropological community. For such reasons, there are grounds for seeing classic social anthropology as a positive step on the road to proper recognition of non-European cultural values. This is particularly the case for Africa, since in most instance the cultures being studied were non-literate cultures of Asia had already been the object of serious study without the help of social anthropology.

British colonialism was consolidated after the 1884-5 Berlin West African Conference, and the process of colonisation was virtually complete by the time anthropological fieldwork began. There was justification for seeing colonialism as a going system at the time. This situation cannot therefore be compared with

the one which Gough[44] and other American writers have justifiably condemned - in which certain American anthropologists were found to be collaborating with the CIA to further militaristic and neo-imperialistic policies. By contrast, the British classical social anthropologists were working a situation where colonialism was already firmly established, and where there was very little organised resistance as yet. Many British anthropologists went on to welcome African nationalism when it eventually appeared.

The final question remaining is one of where to go from here. It is hoped that the complexities of the relationship between British colonialism and the classic period of anthropology have been examined in this paper. The view here taken is that many of the justified criticisms levelled at anthropology were already answered by some relatively orthodox scholars, even before the question arose of critiques from a radical perspective.

It can further be noted that by no means all radicals have opposed the continuation of anthropology. This is particularly true of the French-inspired Marxist anthropologists. Here a relatively strong interest in a microscopic perspective has been combined Marxist approach.[45] It has, however, been observed that Marxist practitioners frequently span disciplinary boundaries; this is seen, for instance, in the contributions to the periodical *Economy and Society*. Once again, the objections to anthropology might turn out to be only to a particular name. If such is the case, it would seem most unfortunate if much of the better work written in the anthropological tradition were to be discounted as a consequence of guilt by association. At times, this seems to be what has happened. Van Donge, for instance, has pointed out that the kind of approach employed in Zambia by the Rhodes-Livingstone School has not been continued after Independence.[46]

Social anthropology has never been forbidden in modern Tanzania, though it has often been seen as suspect. Foreign anthropologists have continued to work in Tanzania since Independence, often using quite orthodox approaches. But there has often been a tendency to be suspicious of microscopic studies, as already noted, and also to see studies which stress the importance of culture as having a low priority.

Recent comments on such issues by social scientists have stressed the importance of both microscopic and cultural studies. Long's observations have already been noted; while Worsely has in his recent work been particularly concerned to oppose the devaluation of culture.[47] He is highly critical of the reduction of the study of society to political economy, he is concerned to stress that production never takes places except as part of a wider set of extra-

economic institutions and relationships.

Moreover, those concerned with development can hardly ignore local cultures. In the Tanzanian context, Abrahams[48] in his study of the Nyamwezi has stressed the importance of culture as a source of human identity and dignity. As such, therefore, he shows that it needs to be respected if people are to be motivated for development. He notes that the Nyamwezi are proud to be Tanzanians, but that their everyday life is still preoccupied with the small-scale.[49]

In conclusion then, it can be seen that microscopic studies which take account of culture (whether they are to be called anthropological or not) have a crucial role to play in that they can make an important contribution to the development of modern Tanzania. It can be seen that in the recent past there has been a general tendency to disregard peasants' knowledge. In practice, if not in theory, 'modernity' and 'science' have been upheld in opposition to peasant 'ignorance' and 'superstition'.[50] This has been linked by Mascarenhas directly to the disregard of the anthropological approach. As he points out:

> There is an awareness now that knowledge about the rural areas is needed more than ever. The lack of it creates a dilemma. Thus, arising from the disappearance of ethno-science, there is a tendency to imitate blindly models developed from elsewhere.[51]

The continued importance of anthropology and its future role in development are therefore clear. There is a need for closer study of local social systems and cultural factors, since peasants knowledge so far has not been given its due.[52] So often apparently correct 'scientific' theories have not worked in practice, and there is a clear need for study of procedures which do appear to work in practice, even if they suffer from the disadvantage that their implications have not been examined closely beyond a particular context.

The irony is that an approach to development which assumes a *tabula rasa* is not only doomed to failure; it also downgrades African culture in a way that has been evident in much of Western ethnocentrism. It is precisely such downgrading of African culture that has been singled out for criticism as part of the nationalist struggle in Tanzania.[53] Anthropology therefore can be seen as having a further contribution as a corrective to such a tendency.

Notes

1. See particularly E.R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, London, Athlone 1961.

2. See R. Fox, *Encounter with Anthropology*, Harmondsworth, penguin, 1975; and 'In the Beginning: Aspects of Hominid Behaviour Evolution', Man. N.S. (2), !('&, pp. 414-33; e.w. Ardener, 'The New Anthropology and its Critics', Man, N.S. (6), 1971, pp. 449-67.

3. E.R. Leach, *Levi-Strauss*, London, Fontan 1970; and *Rethinking Anthropology, op. cit.*; see also J.Banaji, 'The Crisis of British Anthropology', *New Left Review*, No. 64 (1970), pp. 71-85.

4. For a detailed discussion of British social anthropology see A. Kuper, *Anthropologists and Anthropology: The British School 1922-72* Harmondsworth, Penguin 1973.

5. M.Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (eds), *African Political Systems*, London O.U.P., 1940; A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and D.Forde (eds), *African System of Kinship and Marriage*, London, O.U.P. 1950; D.Forde, *African Worlds*, London, O.U.P., 1954.

6. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Anthropology and History', *Essays in Social Anthropology*, London Faber 1962, pp. 46-65.

7. *op. cit.*

8. R. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967: 'Kinship is to anthropology what logic is to philosophy or the nude is to art; it is the basic discipline of the subject (p.10).

9. C. Levi-Strauss, *Les Structures Elementaires de la Parente*, Paris, P.U.F., 1949; translated revised edition, *The Elementary Structures on Kinship*, London, Eyre and Spottiswood, 1969.

10. See, for instance D. MacRae, 'When is an Anthropologist?' *New Society*, 367, 9 October 1969, p. 562.

11. W. James, 'The Anthropologist as Reluctant Imperialist', T.Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, London, Ithaca 1973, pp. 41-70.

12. M. Gluckman, *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa*, London, Cohen and West 1963. p. 248.

13. B. Malinowski, 'Practical Anthropology',*Africa II*, 1929, pp. 23-39.

14. Ibid., p. 35.

15. B. Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change*, London, Yale, U.P., 1945. For a critique from within anthropology see M. Gluckman, 'Malinowski's "functional" analysis of social change', *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa, op. cit.*, pp. 207-234.

16. On the danger of selective quotation, and for comments on Malinowski's general orientation, see R. Grillo, 'Applied Anthropology in the 1980's: retrospect and prospect', R. Grillo and A. Rew (eds.), *Social Anthropology and Development Policy*, London, Tavistock 1985, pp.1-36 (pp. 10-11).

17. B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London, Routledge 1922, pp. 464-2.

18. J. Kenyatta, *Facing Mt. Kenya*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1938.

19. P.E. Mitchell, 'The Anthropologist and the Practical Man: A Reply and a Question', *Africa*, III, 1930, pp. 217-23.

20. For a discussion see G. Leclerc, *Anthropologie et Colonialisme*, Paris, Fayard 1972.

21. A. Kuper, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

22. Mitchell, *op. cit.*

23. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Applied Anthropology', *Africa*, XVI, 1946, pp. 92-8; E.E. Evans-Pritchard and R. Firth, 'Anthropology and Colonial Affairs', *Man*, XLIX (1949), pp. 137-8.

24. P.H.Gulliver, 'An Applies Anthropologist in East Africa During the Colonial Era', Grillo and Rew, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-57.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

26. R. Brown, 'Anthropology and Colonial Rule: Godfrey Wilson and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia, Asad (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 173-98; R. Brown, 'Passages in the Life of a White Anthropologist: Max Gluckman in Northern Rhodesia', *Journal of African History*, XX, 1979, pp. 525-41; J.K.Van Dong, 'Understanding Rural Zambia Today: The Relevance of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Africa, LV, 1985, pp.60-76.

27. '..those Europeans whose attitude to Africans has not only been correct, but benevolent are losing... deference and this is partly due to the antics of the so-called

scientists.

'These latter... like to live as closely to the African way of life as they can. The imagine that by living very much as the African lives, in his village, they will gain the African's confidence and discover the secrets of his personality.

'Frankly, we think that much of this anthropological or sociology study is "honey"... The proper study of mankind may be man, but there is no need to labour this study unnecessary to drop to the African level of village life in order to get the Africans to talk and unburden themselves.

'European familiarity with Africans breeds contempt by Africans... When Africans see European scientific men who are considered by them to be better type Europeans, behaving as if they were Africans, then they lose their deference and respect for all Europeans...*Central African Post*, 10 April 1953, quoted in J.C. Mitchell, 'The Shadow of the Federation, 1952-55', *African Social Research*, 24, 1977, pp. 309-318 (315).

28. T. Asad, 'Introduction' to *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter, op. cit.*, pp. 9-19.

29. I have developed this argument in an earlier paper; see P.G. Forster, 'Empiricism and Imperialism: A Review of the New Left Critique of Social Anthropology', Asad (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 23-40.

30. P. Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', *New Left Review*, No. 50, 1968, pp. 3-57; reprinted in A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn, *Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action*, Harmondsworth, Pungin 1969, pp. 214-284.

31. D. Goddard, 'Limits of British Anthropology' *New Left Review*, No.58, 1969, pp. 79-89.

32. Banaji, *op. cit.*

33. *op. cit.*

34.P.M.Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, London, McGibbon and Kee, 1957, pp. 263-4.

35. M.Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, Oxford, Blackwell 1955; 'Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa', Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-36.

36. R.K. Merton, 'Manifest and Latent Functions', *Social Theory and Social Structure*,

New York, Free Press, 1957 (revised edition), pp. 19-84 (pp. 32-7).

37. P.M.Worsely, 'The Kinship System of the Tallensi: a Revaluation', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, LXXXVI*, 1956, pp. 37-76.

38. M. Bloch, *Marxism and Anthropology*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1983, p.161; J. Copans and D. Seddon, 'Marxism and Anthropology: A Preliminary Survey', D. Seddon (ed.) *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*, London, Cass, 1978, pp.1-46.

39. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

40. M. Gluckman, 'Malinowski's ''Functional'' Theory of Social Change', *op. cit.*

41. For an evaluation of such arguments see N. Long, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Rural Development*, London, Tavistock, 1977, Ch. 4.

42. A.L. Epstein, 'Urban Communities in Africa', M. Gluckman (ed.), *Closed Systems and Open Minds*, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1964, pp. 83-102 (p. 102).

43. Gulliver, *op. cit.* p. 51.

44. G.D. Berreman, ''Is Anthropology Alive? Social Responsibility in Social Anthropology', *Current Anthropology*, IX, 1968, pp. 391-6; K. Gough, 'New Proposals for Anthropologists', *Current Anthropology*, IX, 1968, pp. 403-7.

45. See, especially, Seddon, (ed.), *op. cit.*

46. Van Donge, *op. cit.*

47. P. Worsley, *The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development*, London, Weidenfeld and Nichlson, 1984.

48. R.G. Abrahams, *The Nyamwezi Today*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

49. ibid, p. 134.

50. For development of this argument see P.G.Forster and S. Maghimbi, Introduction to Forster and Maghimbi, *The Tanzanian Peasantry: Economy in Crisis*, Aldershot,

Avebury, 1992, pp. xi-xxiii.

51. A. Mascarenhas, 'After Villagization - what?', in B.V. Mwanasasu and C. Pratt, *Towards Socialism in Tanzania*, Dar es Salaam, TPH, 1979, pp. 145-165 at p. 159.

52. See Forster and Maghimbi, *op. cit.* pp. xxi-xxii.

53. cf. J.K. Nyerere, 'Of all the crimes of colonialism there is none worse than the attempt to make us believe we had no indigenous culture of our own, or that what we did have was worthless - something of which we should be ashamed, instead of a source of pride', *Freedom and Unity*, Dar es Salaam, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 188.