



## History of Anthropology Newsletter

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### "Yours Affectionately, Rex": Radcliffe-Brown During and After World War II

George W. Stocking Jr.

Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown

## SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY

### I. Creation of the Archives de l'ethnologie, Musée de l'Homme

In March of 1985, it was decided to form a new section of the Laboratoire d'Ethnologie du Musée de l'Homme, Paris, entitled the Department d'Archives de l'ethnologie. Directed by Jean Jamin, the Archives will have the task of inventorying manuscripts relating to the ethnographic collections of the Laboratoire; constituting an archive for the history of the Musée, and more generally, of French ethnology; encouraging research on the epistemology and history of ethnology; and organizing a seminar devoted to the history of museological theories and practices in ethnology.

## FOOTNOTES FOR THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY

'Yours Affectionately, Rex'--

Radcliffe-Brown During and After World War II.

A. R. Radcliffe-Brown first met Lloyd Warner in 1926 when he was in transit between two of the many academic appointments he held during the course of his peripatetic career as the Jonathan Applesseed of social anthropology. Having just left the University of Cape Town, where he had served for five years as the first professor of social anthropology, he stopped off in Berkeley on his way to fill the new chair in social anthropology at the University of Sydney. The two were immediately taken with each other intellectually--Warner with Radcliffe-Brown's systematic approach to social phenomena; Radcliffe-Brown, with the obvious capacity of the young student of Robert Lowie--and there seems also to have been a strong personal appeal. Within months, Warner was off to do fieldwork among the Murngin of Arnhem Land in northern Australia, which eventually resulted in a book he dedicated to Radcliffe-Brown (Warner 1937). Warner went on to direct a series of studies of modern communities--all of which he regarded as case studies for Radcliffe-Brown's project of a "comparative natural science of society." In 1935, Warner came to the University of Chicago, to which Radcliffe-Brown had migrated in 1931, and for two years they were both members of the same department of anthropology, before Radcliffe-Brown finally returned from two decades in various then and former British colonies to take up the chair in social anthropology at Oxford--an appointment which, as it happened, did not mark the end of his academic travelling. Over the next decade Warner and Radcliffe-Brown (still known as "Rex" to his intimates) kept in touch, and "R-B"'s half of the correspondence casts an interesting light on the later phase of his career (cf. Stocking 1984). [G.W.S.]

All Souls College, Oxford  
20 August 1939

Dear Lloyd,

. . . I have been having a difficult time, largely owing to the political situation. I have been trying to establish here an Institute of Social Anthropology for research in the British colonies. There is a proposal that the Government shall provide a large sum for scientific research in the colonies, and we should expect to get our research funds from that source. But everything moves very slowly because of concentration on the European situation and rearmament. Meanwhile I have accepted the office of President of the Royal Anthropological Institute, which involves very frequent visits to London.

It is difficult to do any serious work in the atmosphere of uncertainty in which we all live. It now seems certain that war in Europe is inevitable. . It may come next month or next year. So, like everyone else, I have had to consider what I shall do when the war starts. There will be no teaching for me to do in Oxford and this college will be taken over by the government to house one of the courts of justice which will be removed from London. Last year I offered myself for Government service, as did everyone here, but so far they have not found anything that they want me to do when war begins. I am therefore thinking that if it should be possible to leave England I would do so, and the only places I would care to go are China or America. Even if war does not begin before next summer I might decide to resign my job here in September 1940. . . .

I would like to have your own personal opinion about the possibility of my returning to Chicago. I expect that by this time you have entirely replaced me and I suppose and hope that they have made you a full professor with a full salary. So that another social anthropologist . . . would be a luxury. All I want to know in the first instance is your own reaction . . .

With love to you and Mildred,  
Yours, Rex

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7 October 1939

. . . Now that the war has begun it is impossible to guess how or when it will end, but it does seem certain that after it is over there will be a long period of political and economic disturbance in Europe. I see very little hope of carrying through my plan for a Research Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford, though a few months ago the prospect was very hopeful indeed. I am continuing my work here for the next six months as I have thirty-five students who are going into the Colonial Administrative Services in Africa and Malaya . . . . But I find it impossible to do any serious work of my own. . . .

I shall be grateful if you can find out from [Fay-Cooper] Cole [the chairman of the Chicago anthropology department], quietly, if there is any chance that he could offer me a visiting professorship for a year from October 1940.

17 February 1940

It now seems very likely that I shall go to China for six months . . . . I could enjoy a year as visiting professor at either Yale or Harvard, but for a somewhat more permanent stay the truth I miss in Oxford the warm friendliness and congenial company to which I had got accustomed in Chicago. So if, later on, things improve and Cole could find a place for me there would be a strong inducement for me to return.

In China I should go to Kunming where Wu Win-tsao has established an Institute for the Study of man and where they are making studies of Chinese villages. . . .

Optimists think that the war may be over in eighteen months as Germany will not be able to stand a third winter, but I am doubtful. The three most likely moves this year and next are (1) a German attack on the Maginot line (2) a joint German-Russian attack on Scandinavia to permit their navies to operate in the north Atlantic (3) a joint German-Russian attack in the near East against Turkey, Irak and Persia, possibly against India or the Balkans. An attack on Holland and Belgium is much less likely now that those countries are prepared.

There is fear in England and France and a hope in Germany that Roosevelt may try to force an inconclusive peace--an armistice--which would permit Germany and Russia to prepare for another war in a few years in which they would have a much better chance of winning. In anticipation of Roosevelt's possible success the Germans seem to be hurrying up with their plan of exterminating all educated Poles so that a restored Poland will be in a hopeless position.

It is impossible to feel very hopeful about social anthropology in England for the next few years. I am struggling to keep Evans-Pritchard in his job here and to find a job for Meyer Fortes. They are both first-class men. But there are no young men coming on and not much prospect for any who might wish to take up the subject.

If Yale decides not to give Malinowski a permanent job (no decision had been made when I last heard), I may renew negotiations for a visiting professorship there for the year 1941-42. I don't want to compete with Bronio, who is trying hard to secure a job in America, and who needs it more than I do. I hear that his lectures in New York were a flop.

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6 June 1940

To-day is the second day of the Battle of the Somme. If that is lost, Paris may be taken, the Italians will come in and France may be defeated. We are expecting an attempt at invasion, for which we are not yet prepared. Planes, guns and rifles from American would be very useful but there are difficulties in the

way of getting them. If England is occupied plans are being thought of for continuing the war from Canada and Egypt.

Your President is and has been for two years about the best-informed man in the world on all that is happening. There are a good many people here who hope he will be given a third term, and, if the war lasts, even a fourth.

The worst things in this war are yet to come. But if the Germans have not taken either France or England by the time your Presidential election is over they will have lost the war.

Two books are appearing from our department here, 'The Nuer' by Evans-Pritchard and 'African Political systems' edited by Evans-Pritchard and Fortes. I hope they will interest a few people in America. We are preparing to suspend 'Africa' (of which I am one of the editors) for the duration of the war as it is impossible to keep it international. I shall try to keep going the 'Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute' and 'Man' unless the Institute gets bombed.

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15 October 1940

I had obtained leave of absence from the University for this term to go to China, but I decided, for various reasons, not to go at this time. Term is just beginning here and I find there will be little for me to do. I have two Ph.D. students, one Dutch, one Czech. But the young men going out to govern the colonies, of whom I usually have a class of 50, are not coming this year.

It seems likely that the Germans have now abandoned, not merely postponed, their plans for invading England. In a way this is almost to be regretted since if they had made the attempt after the middle of September they would have suffered a defeat which would have greatly shortened the war. As things now are it seems likely that the war, with its senseless destruction of life and property, will go on for two or three years. The people of England are taking the air war calmly and are at present quite determined to go through with it to the end. There is very great and very real appreciation of the help and sympathy we are getting from America. I think the most useful thing that America could do now would be not to come into the war but to give immediate and really effective aid to China on such a scale as to enable the Chinese to make a real counter-offensive against Japan. China's war is part of our war. The Japanese would bluster but I doubt if they would declare war on America. Your President's recent firmness towards Japan is just as heartening to me as the help he has given to England. . . .

There is a rumour that Malinowski is married but we have no real news of him. It seems to be assumed that he will not return to England.

25 October 1940

I am not quite sure just what kind of information about anthropology in 1940 you want. As President, and with the help of the other officers, I have kept the work of the Royal Anthropological Institute going, holding our meetings in the afternoon instead of the evening. The Folk-lore Society suspended its activities soon after the outbreak of war. The International Institute of African Languages and Cultures continued its work till the fall of France and we then decided we could not continue as an international body, so the journal 'Africa' is now suspended for the duration of the war. The teaching of anthropology at Oxford and Cambridge was carried on more or less as usual during the academic year 1939-40 but in the new academic year, beginning October 1, is on a very much reduced scale. The anthropology department of the London School of Economics suspended work from the beginning of the war.

There has been little research in social anthropology. Raymond Firth (London School of Economics) has been carrying out field work in the Malay States and E. R. Leach (also School of Economics) is carrying out research in Burma. From Oxford Ruth Parker has been doing field research in Sumatra. The Oxford University Institute of Social Anthropology (which is what is now the title of my department) made arrangements for a two-year study of African political systems to be carried out by Dr. E. E. Evans-Pritchard (East Africa) and Dr. Meyer Fortes (West Africa) with the co-operation of others. Field-work was to have been begun by October but the war has interfered with the project, which may, however, still be carried out. Professor Daryll Forde (Aberystwyth) made a trip to West Africa to supplement his previous research amongst the Yako. (Incidentally Daryll Forde has become a first-rate social anthropologist--see his papers in J.R.A.I. Africa, and Am. Anthro. I enclose a list of books in social anthropology drawn up by Meyer Fortes.

All this relates only to social anthropology. I don't know if you want archaeology and physical anthropology also. If you do I can collect the information but I do not know of much of importance.

In England there is certainly much more confidence in the ultimate outcome of the war than there was three months ago. Most people are hoping that Roosevelt will be re-elected. This is because he and the men associated with him--Hull, etc.--do thoroughly understand the present situation whereas Wilkie and the Republicans do not. On the other hand it is known that the Germans are very anxious that Roosevelt should be defeated and we are expecting some last minute move to try to move American opinion against Roosevelt.

I have had a letter from the Department of Sociology of Indiana University (Bloomington) asking if I would be willing to head up a Department of Anthropology there if they start one. I imagine that this is an offer that I could hardly accept but I

would like to have your opinion so meanwhile I am writing a non-committal reply.

An air-raid warning is just sounding so I will close this letter. . . .

P.S. You ought to mention the death of two prominent English anthropologists--A. C. Haddon and Professor C.G. Seligman. In February the British Government decided to provide L500,000 a year for scientific research in the British colonies, and this would have included research in social anthropology. As a result of the greatly increased cost of the war the carrying out of the plan has been postponed.

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1 January 1942

. . . Owing to difficulties of travel I shall not be able to go to Brazil by way of U.S.A.

If you could visit São Paulo while I am there it would be absolutely splendid. I will do anything I can at my end. Rockefeller is interested in the new department of social anthropology and has given a grant for research and the purchase of books, so it would be worth while to get in touch with them about it. The sociology is taught by a man named Donald Pierson who is from Chicago, so you may know him. . . .

I sent you recently a reprint of an address to the Anthropological Institute on Social Structure. My address of last June, which will not appear for twelve months, was on the Study of Kinship.

So America has come into the war, and in exactly the way I expected, i.e., through the action of Japan. A few years ago I ventured the prophesy that the war would last four years. I still think that this is a good guess, and the the end is likely to come in the autumn of 1943. We have got more or less use to the state of war in England.

When the war is over, I do not think I shall be particularly anxious to stay in Oxford. The war has thoroughly ruined my plans here. I can say to you that I am much happier with Americans like yourself and some others than I am with Englishmen. So I would really like to be back in American, where I think that, on the whole, social anthropology has a better chance at present than in England. Alternatively, I would go to China and end my days there.

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Escola Livre de Sociologia e Politica de São Paulo  
6 April 1942

I have arrived after a long journey--ten weeks on a small ship--and I got your welcome letter a few days ago. It looks as if there is a good chance to do some interesting work here. I shall try to get to the United States if I can, but travel

presents great difficulties in these days. By air from Brazil it costs \$1,500 and one has to get priority in order to obtain a passage. There is just a chance that I may be able to stay away from England for two years instead of only one and then I ought to be able to get to the U.S. I am hoping the war will end in autumn 1943.

I have heard something of how successful social anthropology has been in government circles in the States and I give you the credit for this. . . . If there is any way in which you could let me have some details of work in applied anthropology in the last few years I should be very grateful. I shall want to work up a case to be put before the President of this country.

I look forward eagerly to the Yankee City volumes. Apart from everything else I want to use them here to educate not only students but also educators and politicians.

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Maes y fallen  
Bont-ddu  
Nr. Dolgellery  
Mersoneth, Wales  
[1946]

. . . I hope that you will believe that my failure to keep up our correspondence is not the result of any diminution of my affection for you. . . . When I was in Brazil I tried to arrange to return to England by way of the United States but found it impossible as all transport was under military control. Both [Robert] Redfield and [A. L.] Kroeber asked me recently if I would be willing to come to the U.S. to lecture. It would, of course, be a question of money as now I have only a very small income.

When I retired from Oxford last July I came here to my cottage in the mountains hoping to be able to have plenty of time for writing. But in the present conditions I cannot get a servant and the household chores take up far too much of my time. So I have had to change my plans and take another job so that I can have enough to live on. I have agreed to go for two years to the new university in Alexandria in order to organize a department of "social science." Hitherto social science has been included in the philosophy department. My lungs, with their old tubercular lesions, have been giving me trouble and the doctors tell me that Egypt will be a very good place for me to go to.

I got down to the revision of the report of the Chicago seminar in 1938 but found I wanted to re-write a great deal of it. Then came an invitation to deliver the Muirhead Lectures at Birmingham University and I took as my subject "The Natural Science of Society" hoping to make a book of them. This was January to March 1939. Came the war, my visit to Brazil, and the project was dropped [cf. Radcliffe-Brown 1956].

About a year ago I thought I might reprint in a volume some of my occasional papers and addresses, adding an essay containing



the points of the seminar. The Cambridge University Press told me that though they were interested their whole programme was full for two years.

Now I have agreed to write a small book on Social Anthropology for the Home University Library. It will have to be a book for the general public but it may be of some use to students. But with the conditions of the publishing trade (atill a great shortage of paper and labour) it will not be out till 1949. I cannot make a start with the writing till I have finished a job I have in hand--a long introduction to a volume of papers on Kinship and Marriage in Africa [Radcliffe-Brown & Forde, eds. 1950].

Evans-Pritchard tells me that in reply to your letter he suggested that the Chicago University Press might publish a volume of my printed papers. I am agreeable to this and if it were arranged I could add an Introduction. The possible papers are The Mother's Brother in South Africa (1924) Sociological Theory of Totemism (1930) Concept of Function (1935) Social Structure (1940) The Study of Kinship Systems (1941) Taboo, Religion and Society (1945) [cf. Radcliffe-Brown 1952].

As I think you know, I do not attach any importance to anything I have written with the single exception of the Social Organization of Australian Tribes [1931] and that needs to be re-written into a book. I shall take my Australian material to Egypt, in the hope that I can do it there. It is by my Australian work that I would wish to be judged.

As it will be four or five years before I could produce the new version of Australian social organization, if the volume of reprinted papers is possible the Oceania monograph might be included. It has long been out of print.

If the Chicago University Press does not want the volume of reprinted papers I will try the Cambridge Press again later as I think they would do it if they were given time. But if you want the revised (or re-written) seminar for publication I am afraid you will have to wait till the end of 1948. But the book on Social Anthropology may to some extent take its place.

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c/o Barclays Bank  
Dolgelley, North Wales  
15 December 1949

This is to wish you and Mildred and the Warner family a happy and prosperous New Year, and also to thank you for your contribution to "Social Structure" of which a beautifully bound copy was presented to me a few weeks ago [Fortes, ed. 1949]. I do not see my way at present of returning to the United States. Just now I am going for a holiday to the south of France where I hope to finish my little book on Social Anthropology. The joint book on African Systems of Kinship and Marriage is at last being printed by the Oxford University Press. I am hoping that I shall soon be able to get back to writing about Australia.

Are you thinking of making a reply to Murdock's absurd paper on the Murngin? If not, would you like me to do it? [cf. Radcliffe-Brown 1951] Fred Eggan thinks that I ought to take some notice of Murdock's book. The new book on kinship by Claude Lévi-Strauss has a long chapter on the Murngin system, which perhaps you have not seen. It is less absurd than Murdock's paper, but still essentially wrong. The Murngin are beginning to make history, but it is a pity they have to do it in this way [cf. Barnes 1967 for "the Murngin controversy"]. There are, however, a few persons who appreciate your treatment of the myth-ritual complex; two of them were expressing their admiration to me a few days ago. After all it is only now, and thanks to the Free Press, that the Andaman Islanders, written in 1913 begins to be generally read.

As I have no fixed address I can only give the address of my bank in Wales, which forwards letters to me from time to time. I may decide to go back to Egypt next October. I certainly cannot live in England in the winter. Perhaps, after all, I might find it possible to return to the United States. The greatest pleasure that that would afford me would be to see you again after these long years.

Yours affectionately,

Rex

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The letters are preserved in the Special Collections Department of the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago, and are reproduced here with the permission of the Department and of Mrs. Cynthia Pike, the daughter of Radcliffe-Brown.

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