

PLATE II



Photograph by Lafayette Ltd.

ALFRED REGINALD RADCLIFFE-BROWN, 1939

ALFRED REGINALD RADCLIFFE-BROWN¹

1881-1955

ALFRED REGINALD RADCLIFFE-BROWN was born on 17 January 1881 at Sparkbrook, Birmingham. His father died in 1886, leaving his mother penniless with three young children. She had to take a post as companion, while the children were supported by their maternal grandmother. The family moved about 1890 to Handsworth. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (who changed his surname from Brown to Radcliffe-Brown by the addition of his mother's maiden name by deed poll in April 1926) was educated first at the Royal Commercial Travellers' School, Pinner, Middlesex, and in November 1896 he was admitted to King Edward's School, Birmingham, as a Foundation Scholar. He left at the end of 1898, and for a time he had a post at the Birmingham Library. But his elder brother Herbert, to whom he had always a strong attachment, encouraged him to read some philosophy, with the result that he was awarded an Exhibition for Moral Science at Trinity College, Cambridge. He matriculated in the University as a member of Trinity College in the Michaelmas Term 1902, having passed the Previous Examination ('Little-Go') in that term. His tutor was W. W. Rouse Ball. In 1903 he became a Sizar of Trinity College and was awarded a college prize for Moral Science. He was assisted financially at this time by his brother who was then established in South Africa, and who used for the purpose, with other resources, a wound gratuity received through service in the Anglo-Boer War. In 1904 Radcliffe-Brown was placed in the first division of the Second Class in Part I of the Moral Sciences Tripos and in 1905

¹ In the preparation of this memorial notice of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown I have been indebted to many people, not all of whom I can name. But I must mention: Mrs. Alan Pike, his daughter; Mr. Herbert Radcliffe-Brown, his brother; Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard, F.B.A., his literary executor; Mr. E. L. Grant Watson, his friend and author of *But to What Purpose*, from which he has generously allowed me to quote; the Registrar of the University of Cambridge; the Chief Master of King Edward's School, Birmingham; Professor D. S. Robertson, F.B.A., Professor C. Daryll Forde, and Professor I. Schapera.

I am also indebted for some details to the biographical sketch by Professor M. Fortes given as introduction to the set of essays on *Social Structure: Studies Presented to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown* (1949); the obituary notice by Professor F. Eggan and Professor W. Lloyd Warner in the *American Anthropologist*, vol. lviii, pp. 544-7 (July 1956); and that by Professor A. P. Elkin in *Oceania*, vol. xxvi, pp. 239-51 (June 1956).

in the First Class in Part II (in which he took Metaphysical and Moral Philosophy and History of Modern Philosophy). He graduated M.A. in 1909.

Already, while an undergraduate, his interests had begun to veer towards anthropology. In 1904 his studies in psychology brought him into contact with W. H. R. Rivers, whose own zest for anthropology had been awakened by participation with A. C. Haddon in the Torres Straits Expedition of 1898. Radcliffe-Brown became Rivers's first pupil in anthropology, and he also began to study the subject with Haddon. In 1905, after graduation, he went out to South Africa as secretary to Section H (Anthropology) of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which met in Johannesburg that year. In 1906 he was elected to an Anthony Wilkin Studentship in Ethnology at the University of Cambridge. With this and grants from the Royal Society and the Government of India he carried out anthropological research in the Andaman Islands from 1906 to 1908. On his return to England he presented the preliminary results of his work as a thesis to Trinity College, and was awarded a Fellowship. He spent part of his time in Cambridge, where he had rooms in Trinity Street, and part in London, where in 1909-10 he held a Lectureship in Ethnology at the London School of Economics. (This was a post held by Haddon from 1904-9, and afterwards by C. G. Seligman from 1910-13.)

In London Radcliffe-Brown lectured twice a week in the Michaelmas and Lent terms on 'Ethnology', including the physical varieties of man, classification of languages, technology, and 'social morphology (the study of social structure)'; he also gave some special lectures on the Australian aborigines. At this time, as for long afterwards, he was still prepared to teach general anthropology along the Haddon line, though the definition of his major life-interest in social anthropology had begun. This definition appeared more clearly in his Cambridge lectures. The notice of them stated: 'Mr. A. R. Brown, Fellow of Trinity College, will give a course of twelve lectures on Comparative Sociology in the Lent Term of 1910. The lectures will be delivered in the Archaeological Museum on Thursdays and Saturdays at 5.30, beginning on January 22nd. No previous reading in the subject will be required.' The lectures included topics such as: the aims and methods of sociology; the classification of social types; general laws of social evolution; the evolution of social structure; the origin, development and function of law, morals, and religion; economic institutions; the relation of

society and the individual; and the social origin of general ideas. This notice is indicative of two things. The topics, showing the generality and the boldness of Radcliffe-Brown's thinking, represent nearly all the main themes which preoccupied him for the rest of his career. The statement that no previous reading would be required of his audience reveals a characteristic attitude—that he regarded himself as able to supply systematically and adequately a correct framework of ideas on abstruse general topics.

At this time Radcliffe-Brown was something of a figure in Cambridge. Opinions about him were sharply divided and their memories have survived even to the present time. He was strikingly handsome and a virile personality. His conversation was forceful and brilliant. Some of his contemporaries found great pleasure in it, others found him intellectually arrogant and irritatingly assertive. He also exaggerated, undoubtedly for effect, but he somehow had the air of believing in his own exaggeration. A revealing sketch of him has been given by his contemporary, E. L. Grant Watson, in his autobiography *But to What Purpose* (London, 1946, pp. 83–88 *et passim*). One paragraph succinctly refers to this side of Radcliffe-Brown's character:

Towards the end of the first term in my fourth year I met A. R. Brown, who was recently returned from the Andaman Islands, where he had been studying the social organisation of the islanders. He was now planning an expedition to North-West Australia, and it was mooted that I might possibly go with him as Zoologist to the expedition. Brown, Anarchy Brown, as he was then called, for he had been a declared Anarchist, had a peculiar reputation at Trinity. In spite of his having passed all examinations with distinction, and being a Scholar and Fellow of the college, there were many of the erudite who looked on him with suspicion. He was too dramatic a personality to fit easily into the conservative life of a college. He often made wild statements, he was brilliantly informed on *all* subjects. That, of course, told against him, and then he had lived as a primitive autocrat, exercising a beneficent but completely authoritarian sway over the simple Andamanese, who had not been in a position to criticise his grand gestures. He was in fact a bit of a superman, and one who strove, more consistently than any other man I have met, to live consciously and according to a set plan, dictated by his reason and will. It is true that he sometimes lapsed from his high standard, and was led by his inventive genius to fabricate the stories he told, and often it was not difficult to see this invention in process. This made the scholarly and conscientious distrustful of him, but I have every reason to believe that these extravagances, which he allowed himself in talk, never once found their way into his published work.

But Grant Watson, like others, fell under Radcliffe-Brown's spell and has made generous acknowledgement of his stimulus, his great gifts, and his courtesy towards those whom he liked.

His anarchism seems to have been a compound of several elements: his idealism, his personal acquaintance with Russians at Cambridge, and perhaps a deeply hidden romantic feeling for heroic danger and for doomed causes. Later, the personal reasons which may have helped to crystallize these anarchistic views passed away and he renounced this doctrine, arguing that socialism and not anarchism was a more realizable aim. Among his more recondite interests at this time seems to have been hypnotism—which, rumour has it, he practised at times with unfortunate results.

In 1910 Radcliffe-Brown left again for the field. Though apparently at one time he had hoped to go to the Nicobar Islands, and contribute by anthropology to the solution of their administrative problems, he now turned to Western Australia. He joined Grant Watson in Perth, and there they added Mrs. Daisy Bates, who had won a great reputation for her enthusiastic devotion to the welfare of the Australian aborigines and for her knowledge of their customs. As a cook, they added a Swedish ex-sailor, whom Radcliffe-Brown captivated by a superior demonstration of sailors' knots. The course of the expedition has been graphically described by Grant Watson. Mrs. Bates had been instrumental in having the finances of the expedition strengthened by a large cheque from a local sheep farmer. But she and Radcliffe-Brown were very different, temperamentally and in their conceptions of scientific work, and they did not see eye to eye on the leadership of the expedition. At first they all went to Sandstone on the Upper Murchison river, leaving the railhead in a horse-drawn wagon for a spot where a large corroboree was reported to be about to be celebrated. The corroboree took place, but was broken up by a police raid in search of some aboriginal murderers, and the participants fled. Daisy Bates held that they would foregather again, and Radcliffe-Brown held that they would not. The upshot of the argument was that Radcliffe-Brown led off the bulk of the expedition in the wagon, leaving Mrs. Bates alone on the corroboree site. He and Grant Watson then went to Bernier Island, where later Mrs. Bates rejoined them. In the lock-hospital there for male aborigines infected with venereal disease, large numbers of men from different tribal groups could be found and (this time) they could not run away. After working in company for some months there, and on the

neighbouring Dorre Island in a similar women's community, and on the Gascoyne river, Radcliffe-Brown carried out further field research alone for another year in other parts of coastal Western Australia, between the lower De Grey and lower Fortescue rivers.

Much of this research was carried out in long-settled pastoral country in which aboriginal tribal life had ceased. It would nowadays be classed as 'survey work', and in detail is not particularly impressive. It suffered from two defects. In Australia, as in the Andamans, he never used the vernacular with any fluency, but relied on a *lingua franca* or an interpreter. Again, a great part of his documentation consisted of native statements about social behaviour, not his own observations of that behaviour. Hence his formulations tended to deal rather aridly with rules only, and omit consideration of actual variations. Though to a great extent this selection was dictated by the conditions of his field-work, it also accorded with his own temperamental disposition.

But this research was the first field study in Australia by a professionally trained social anthropologist, and its results are noteworthy for their clarity and for the firm, enduring theoretical framework to which they were related. On the testimony of Grant Watson, who had every opportunity of seeing Radcliffe-Brown collecting his data, he was a most careful and patient field worker. He treated his native informants with courtesy and gentleness and seemed to have the faculty of arousing their interest and inspiring their confidence. Genealogies and kinship material he took with great precautions, cross-checking them wherever he could.¹

In 1913 Radcliffe-Brown returned again to England and attended the British Association Meeting in Birmingham. At this time he was again living at Handsworth. Towards the end of that year and in January 1914 he gave a series of lectures at the University of Birmingham under the title of 'Social Anthropology'. These were very similar to the Cambridge lectures of 1910, the most significant difference being the omission of any reference to economic institutions in the later series, and the

¹ This care may have been in part a reaction from his Andamans experience where, curiously enough, his contribution to kinship studies was very slight. Indeed, he says himself of this in his book (p. 72 n.): 'I collected a number of genealogies from the natives, but unfortunately my own inexperience in the use of the genealogical method, and my consequent inability to surmount the difficulties with which I met, made this branch of my investigations a failure.'

substitution of a lecture on the origin and development of the aesthetic arts.

In 1914 he returned to Australia to attend the Meeting of the British Association in Melbourne, and to undertake further field research. He did carry out some work in the Murray-Darling river basin,¹ but the outbreak of war upset his plans, and he seems to have had difficulty in obtaining support. He was rejected for military service, and earned his livelihood for a period in the middle of the war by teaching geography at the North Shore (Sydney) Church of England Grammar School. It is probably due partly to this experience that he was able to take up appointment as Director of Education in the Kingdom of Tonga, a post which he held in 1916-19. He did not carry out any actual field research in Tonga, but gathered some interesting material on the traditional social and political structure, which he furnished to R. W. Williamson for his work on *The Social and Political Systems of Central Polynesia* (1924). In a letter to Williamson, Radcliffe-Brown explained that his work was cut short because his health broke down. It is probably for this reason that the Premier of Tonga, reporting to the local parliament after he had gone, said that he was not able to present an educational report for the past year because the retiring Director had not provided one, though he had promised to do so! In any case, after helping in the influenza epidemic in Fiji at the end of 1918, Radcliffe-Brown had himself contracted the illness and, on medical advice, went to join his brother in Johannesburg.

In South Africa he was at last on the true threshold of his academic career. For a short time he lectured in English at the University College, Johannesburg (afterwards University of the Witwatersrand), and he also held the post of Ethnologist in the Transvaal Museum at Pretoria. A legacy of this last real pre-occupation with primitive technology and material culture is the illustrated article on native dolls he published five years later in the *Annals of the Museum*.

Towards the end of 1920, largely as the result of initiative by A. C. Haddon from Cambridge, the University of Cape Town instituted a Chair of Social Anthropology, and Radcliffe-Brown was appointed to it. A letter from the Prime Minister's office, dated 24 June 1920, written personally by General Smuts to Radcliffe-Brown, refers to this:

¹ Except for two very brief field trips in New South Wales, in 1929 and 1930, totalling only a few weeks, this was his last piece of research in the field.

Dear Mr. Brown, I have received a letter from Mr. Haddon of Christ's College about our ethnological work in South Africa and your special qualifications for such work. I have discussed the subject with Professor Beattie of the Cape Town University and shall be glad if you will communicate with him as the University has a scheme for taking up this work. Yrs sincerely, J. C. Smuts.

Radcliffe-Brown's work in South Africa was not arduous but he was active in both theoretical and applied social anthropology. He helped to establish the School of African Life and Languages at Cape Town and became its first Director. His inaugural lecture (published in 1922) on 'Some Problems of Bantu Sociology' showed how quickly he had adapted himself to the new ethnographic scene and extracted from it propositions of general significance. His influence had also been felt in the University of the Witwatersrand, where Mrs. A. W. Hoernlé began the teaching of social anthropology. But he did not ignore the implications of his study for a wider public. In 1923 he gave a series of addresses on applied anthropology, his title being 'Economic Aspects of the Native Problem in South Africa'. Afterwards published in the *Cape Times*, these helped to bring home to the man in the street the significance of social anthropology. In 1924 he attended a meeting of the Transkeian Territories General Council (the *Bunga*)—as a photograph of the assembly shows. In a letter from Smuts, dated 10 January 1924, this time from Groote Schuur, he thanks Radcliffe-Brown for his 'first address' and a syllabus of a course of lectures: 'I agree that your first object should be scientific. At the same time, I am glad that you are not neglecting the practical aspects of your task; the scientific work to be done in connection with S. African anthropology is indeed enormous, and I wish you every possible success.'

But Radcliffe-Brown did not remain much longer in South Africa. His distinction as a teacher and his stature as an anthropological thinker of first magnitude were becoming well known, in particular since the publication of his book *The Andaman Islanders: A Study in Social Anthropology* (1922). This work was his Trinity College Fellowship thesis, much rewritten, and delayed in publication by the war. The book is uneven, distinguished for its theory rather than for its ethnography, much of which is too much occupied with pointing up the material of E. H. Man, Radcliffe-Brown's predecessor in the Andaman field. Despite its sub-title, it contains much that is not social anthropology, including an interesting Appendix on the technical culture of the

Andaman islanders. But the supreme merit of the book is its interpretation of Andamanese custom and belief in terms not of their origins, as was the current fashion, but of their contemporary meaning to the people themselves, by reference to their social effects. The novelty of this to British anthropology lay in its direct application of Durkheimian analysis to first-hand field material, and almost at once the book became a standard work.

When therefore it was sought to fill a new Chair of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, Radcliffe-Brown was an obvious choice. He left South Africa for Australia in 1926. The establishment of the new chair had been closely associated with the provision of ample funds by the Rockefeller Foundation to enable the Australian National Research Council to sponsor anthropological field research. Radcliffe-Brown, as Chairman of the Anthropology Committee, took full advantage of these facilities. He was able to secure research workers from Britain, Australia, and the United States and send them into various parts of Australia and the Western Pacific. The material from all these field expeditions, demanding an avenue of publication, led Radcliffe-Brown to the establishment of the journal *Oceania*. The new Australian data, in particular, aided and stimulated him in the production of his now classic monograph *The Social Organization of Australian Tribes* (1930-1). This was a magnificent synthesis from data which were, in many respects, imperfect; for the first time it drew together in manageable form the scattered materials of Australian social systems and also put forward a clear and, for the most part, acceptable classification and theoretical explanation of them. The basic defect of the monograph is that it is almost entirely a description of ideal systems, of rules as formulated—not of actual behaviour of the systems in operation. But while this mode of treatment sprang essentially from Radcliffe-Brown's own mode of approach, it is true that the then state of Australian anthropology left him little other choice.

During his time in Sydney, as at Cape Town, Radcliffe-Brown was prominent in extra-mural activities connected with his subject. He prepared a preliminary paper on the Australian aborigines for the Second General Session of the Institute of Pacific Relations in July 1927. In March 1928 he participated with the Rev. F. W. Burton and W. Lloyd Warner in a set of addresses on 'Some aspects of the aboriginal problem in Australia'. He attended the Fourth Pacific Science Congress in Java in 1929 and read two papers. One, on the 'Sociological Theory of

Totemism', was a novel theoretical contribution. The other, on 'Historical and Functional Interpretations of Culture in relation to the Practical Application of Anthropology to the Control of Native Peoples', advocated the study of culture as a functional system and maintained the value of such study in connexion with the administration and education of backward peoples. In 1930 he contributed a chapter on 'Former Numbers and Distribution of the Australian Aborigines' to the Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth. In May of the same year he gave his Presidential Address on 'Applied Anthropology' to Section F of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science at their Brisbane Meeting. In this address he pointed out how the rapid development of technology with its concomitants in economic change had not allowed parallel development in the human fields: 'Materially, our civilization has advanced with giant strides. Spiritually, it would seem that it has not advanced at all and in some respects has retrogressed.' This early statement of what is now a common theme led him to the inference that it is not through cessation of further scientific inquiry but through the development of it that progress must lie: 'It is only through scientific enquiry that we can hope to solve the very complex problem with which we are faced in the ordering of our social life; but it must be scientific enquiry directed at that social life itself.' He further illustrated his view by discussing a development which he himself had initiated, the training in anthropology of administrative officials who were to work in New Guinea—a practice which has continued in modified form until the present time.

For much of this period Radcliffe-Brown was perhaps as happy as at any other time in his later life. He was in contact once more with a research area in which earlier he had invested considerable intellectual capital. He had a new and expanding department. He had eager students and junior colleagues to aid him in his work, an attentive general public to address, and the resources with which to encourage and supply field research. He had also, outside his academic life, a set of friends who admired him for his intelligence and his culture. While widely known later on as 'R-B' to colleagues and generations of students, he was then called 'Rex' by his intimates, a name which suited his bearing and his disposition. He cultivated the arts, taking an intelligent interest in painting, and installing in his flat a small upright piano on which he played, with no great skill but considerable feeling, simple melodies of Dandrieu, Couperin,

Rameau, and Domenico Scarlatti. He moved when he chose in the highest circles of Sydney society. But what seems to have pleased him most were the small informal gatherings at which he held forth on an amazing range of subjects, from Javanese dances, the theory of instincts, and the sociology of Herbert Spencer to the Cambridge (Man) 'Hunt' and the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. Here he sometimes displayed what one who knew him in his Cambridge days has referred to as his lack of power or of habit of distinguishing between first-hand and second-hand knowledge. This intellectual deafness was a reflex of his egocentrism—all that he learnt became an integral part of himself and was fitted into his own personality. One result was sometimes a propensity to lecture people upon their own subject. But his conversation had great point and often great charm; his approach was usually fresh and his ideas stimulating.

He cultivated if not unorthodoxy, at least individuality. Half-joking, on one occasion he declared himself to be a Zen Buddhist, a way of life which accorded well with the commingling of austerity in taste and freedom from conventional rule which he was apt to practise. Advocacy of unpopular but intellectually defensible causes seems always to have attracted him. It is probably no accident that among the papers he left behind him is a copy of the first number of *The Jacobite*, a little journal published in Gisborne, New Zealand, in 1919, to perpetuate the principles of the White Rose. In Sydney he aroused public interest by his championship of the argument that the real author of the works attributed to William Shakespeare was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. It is symptomatic that in a folder containing his notes on this subject was a slip of paper with the remark copied in his handwriting: 'Those twin Goliaths of authority and received opinion have ever been among the greatest enemies of human knowledge.' This championship found expression in various ways. He was a member of the Shakespeare Fellowship, founded in November 1922, with promotion of the theory of Oxfordian authorship among its objects. He found a joking appropriateness in the fact that in 1930-1 he was living in what had formerly been the ballroom of the old Oxford Hotel, Sydney. In 1930 he supported the claims of Edward de Vere in public debate, conducting himself with great skill and aplomb. The decision of the audience finally went against him, partly because of the difficulty of overcoming 'received opinion' and partly because his opponent was unscrupulous enough to excite the

ribaldry of the public by making free use of the fact that Radcliffe-Brown's principal authority cited was the unhappily-named, though scholarly, Mr. J. Thomas Looney.

By 1930 the economic depression had struck deep into the Australian academic sphere, and the future of social anthropology became obscure, partly because of the lack of assured support from the Australian State and Commonwealth governments. At this time Radcliffe-Brown accepted an offer of a professorship of anthropology from the University of Chicago.

Before taking up this appointment he attended the Centenary Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in London in 1931, as President of the Anthropology Section. His address on 'The Present Position of Anthropological Studies' raised important general theoretical issues and, under the name of Comparative Sociology put forward what he called 'the newer anthropology'. He stressed his view that any attempt to discover the general laws of human society must be based on a thoroughly detailed study and comparison of widely different types of culture. He stressed also that such study requires field research and interpretation of the material by the field worker himself. (He also pointed out that research in social anthropology is generally expensive.) His insistence that research and theory must not be separated but must be as closely united as they are in other sciences was valuable reinforcement to the views which Malinowski had been putting forward in Britain during the previous decade.

The profound influence of Radcliffe-Brown in Chicago and more widely in American anthropology has already been effectively demonstrated by the book on *The Social Anthropology of North American Tribes* (1938), edited by Fred Eggan and dedicated to him by some of his pupils there. The opening passage of Robert Redfield's introduction: 'This book marks the conclusion of an important passage in the recent history of American anthropology—the immediate presence and participation of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown' is sufficient indication of his achievement. He did not conquer American anthropology to the degree that Malinowski in his day conquered British anthropology, but he provided a most important vitalizing influence.

Freedom from administrative duties now helped him to develop several important themes, including the theory of social sanctions and of primitive law, and of that refractory subject, totemism. A mimeograph version of 'The Nature of a Theoretical Natural Science of Society' (for a seminar in 1937), though not widely

known, embodies many of his general views. Memories are still current of the enthusiasm aroused by his discussions on the concept of social structure and of how, after talking about the concept for half the night, graduate students would rush back the next morning eager to hear more. A letter to Radcliffe-Brown from A. L. Kroeber, who was Visiting Professor very soon afterwards, says:

I had a devil of a time with the advanced students during the first month because they had learned words with your definition and implications to a degree that I was not aware of. You have certainly left an intellectual impress here. The students and I finally equated our terms and meanings and from that time on everything went smoothly.

Wherever he went, Radcliffe-Brown conceived grand plans for systematic research. In South Africa he had attempted to found an Anthropological Institute. He also had a scheme for the organization of anthropological research on a comparative basis throughout South Africa. Both in South Africa and in Australia he began schemes of 'Tribal Files' under elaborate headings; data were to be typed in duplicate so that one copy could be filed under the tribal name while the other went under the subject heading. But neither of these schemes developed far. In Sydney he had been able to launch comparative field studies of some systematic character, but the economic depression had blocked further advance for the time being. Now, in Chicago, he tried again. He started a systematic comparative study of the social organization of North American tribes, though this work was not brought to completion. He also had wider plans. A letter from him to me in July 1932 said:

There is a scheme now before the Rockefeller Foundation (I am primarily responsible) for the expenditure of \$5,000,000 on a study of disappearing cultures all over the world. Nothing definite will be decided for a few months, but there seems to be a fair chance that at any rate something, and probably something big, will ultimately come of it. Till some decision is reached on that matter I shall stay here in Chicago.

He did in fact stay in Chicago until 1937. In the meantime, however, there occurred what Fortes has rightly described as 'a particularly congenial episode'—a visit to China as a Visiting Professor at Yenching University. He arrived there in October 1935 and lectured for about three months, stimulating students and colleagues greatly. An article of his, 'Suggestions Concerning Sociological Investigations of Village Life in China', translated into Chinese by Wu Wen-tso, was published in the

Yenching Journal. This is said to have followed closely the argument of a paper entitled 'An Enquiry into Modern Society from the Point of View of Anthropology', given by Radcliffe-Brown at the 14th annual meeting of the Sociological Research Society at the University of Chicago, though the Chinese version was fuller and gave a more thorough discussion of the appropriate research methods. China and its culture charmed Radcliffe-Brown. He had for long delighted in reading some of the translations of Chinese philosophers, and often quoted from them. He had already in 1930 acquired some beautiful Chinese furniture (brought down to Sydney by refugees), and to this he now added a few paintings. Later, they all adorned his rooms in All Souls.

In 1937 Radcliffe-Brown accepted an invitation to occupy the first Chair of Social Anthropology in the University of Oxford; he also became a Fellow of All Souls. His presence at Oxford gave a great fillip to British social anthropology, especially since the departure of Malinowski to the United States in 1938 left it with no other outstanding leader. But his work at Oxford bore fruit rather indirectly. The times were not propitious for any great development of his subject. The importance of the problems on which social anthropology could throw some light had not been fully perceived, and it was not until after the war that their complexity and urgency were revealed. Meanwhile, the war inhibited nearly all academic activity. Moreover, from the outset Radcliffe-Brown had not been able to secure students in such numbers as he had hoped. Oxford had too many competing attractions and the call of the basic subjects was too strong to win even for him the audiences to which he had been accustomed. It was, then, by his influence on the devoted few rather than in the University at large that Radcliffe-Brown made his mark. His inaugural lecture dealing with the differences between the disciplines of history and of the natural sciences was, significantly, never published. It was perhaps in the Common Room of All Souls that he was most happy at Oxford; there, while the foibles of his omniscience were regarded with amusement, increasingly his companionship was accepted with pleasure, while his scholarship in his own subject was perforce always treated with respect.

Radcliffe-Brown re-entered British anthropological affairs as a senior figure. In 1938 he lectured on Applied Anthropology to the Oxford University Summer School on Colonial Administration, and in 1939 he delivered the Frazer Lecture in Cambridge, on 'Taboo'. In 1939-41 he was President of the Royal

Anthropological Institute, and delivered two lectures, 'On Social Structure' and 'On the Study of Kinship Systems', which have already become classics in their field. In 1945 he gave the first Henry Myers Lecture on 'Religion and Society', a valuable examination of ancestor worship and Australian totemism. In 1938 the Royal Anthropological Institute awarded him the Rivers Memorial Medal, and in 1951 the Huxley Memorial Medal. At various times he advised the International African Institute on research and publications; he was a member of its Council from 1937.

But because of the stultification of the war he interrupted his residence at Oxford. On a cultural mission for the British Council, he became Visiting Professor from 1942 to 1944 at the Escola Livra de Sociologia at São Paulo, Brazil.

In July 1946 he retired from Oxford on reaching the age-limit for professors. For a while he lived at a cottage in Wales, but he was not adapted to the intellectual isolation of existence there. His active work in anthropology was by no means at an end. In November 1946 he gave four Special University Lectures on 'Law and Society' at the London School of Economics. From 1947 to 1949 he was Professor of Social Sciences and Director of the Institute of Social Studies in the Farouk I University at Alexandria. Though it had been hoped that he might have induced the Egyptian Government to underwrite research in social anthropology, this did not happen. But his impact upon the more gifted students was considerable. After his return from Alexandria he gave a lecture course and seminar at University College, London. Then, after intervals in the south of France to alleviate the bronchitis from which he intermittently suffered, he went to Manchester. It was at the beginning of the formation of the Department of Social Anthropology in the University and Max Gluckman, the first professor, has acknowledged the help Radcliffe-Brown gave in establishing the subject. For a term in 1950 and again in 1951 he gave three lectures a week on 'Philosophical Prolegomena of the Social Sciences', 'The Theory of Evolution', and 'Australian Cosmology'. During this period he also delivered the Josiah Mason Lectures at the University of Birmingham, his subject being 'Primitive Cosmology'.¹

Radcliffe-Brown was a devoted scientist but intermittent in

¹ These lectures were taken down in shorthand and were intended to be published in book form, but though announced in publishers' catalogues they were never completed. Another book on social anthropology for the Home University Library was also left in an incomplete state at his death.

his family relations. He married in 1910, shortly before going on his first Australian expedition. But he did not take his wife with him to the field, though later in Birmingham, in Tonga, and in South Africa she and their daughter were with him. His marriage was dissolved in 1933. But when Radcliffe-Brown came to Manchester, he found family enjoyment in the company of his daughter, now married herself, and of his grandchildren.

In November 1951 he left again for South Africa and spent nearly three years there, mainly in charge of the teaching of social anthropology at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. But this was his last professional appointment. He returned to England in July 1954. His health, which had troubled him for a number of years, grew steadily worse, though he had rallied meanwhile from a fall at Grahamstown in which he had broken several ribs. After his return he never fully recovered his vitality, and he died on 24 October 1955.

Though his last few posts, while of great benefit to students, had yielded little profit to theoretical anthropology, his creative achievement had lasted for over forty years. Essentially, what Radcliffe-Brown had done over this long period was to guide and lead the development of social anthropology as a discipline. Like Malinowski, from whom he increasingly differed, he founded much of his theory upon Durkheim. But unlike Malinowski, he preserved a great deal of the Durkheimian apparatus both of concepts and of terminology. He and Durkheim never met. A card from Durkheim in Paris on 12 January 1914 said that he had hoped for a visit from Radcliffe-Brown in the New Year but had now renounced this expectation. He had read with much interest the programme of Radcliffe-Brown's Birmingham lectures: 'It has brought me a new proof of the understanding which reigns between us on the general conception of our science.' But while he drew upon Durkheim for the understanding of social phenomena in general, and his ideas of a systematic approach in studying them, he made a basic contribution of his own in several ways. He presented what Durkheim lacked—a coherent body of field material collected by first-hand observation in relation to problems formulated in advance. He was thus able to give a substance and plausibility to his theories on Australian totemism in a way which Durkheim never could. As time went on, he developed the concept of social structure as a central theme in his analysis, and though he did not explore the concept itself systematically, he applied it with increasing success to the

explanation of social phenomena. This success remains outstanding in the field of kinship, where the bulk of his contribution must remain as part of the enduring fabric of anthropological studies. In some ways what is almost his last piece of creative writing, the lengthy 'Introduction' to the well-known *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (1950), is one of his best pieces of work, bringing together a wide range of comparative scholarship and infused with the precision and clarity of his theoretical conceptions.

However, his work has defects which are coming to be more clearly recognized even by his greatest admirers. Some of his generalizations, neat in verbal form, are thin and tautologous when carefully examined. His explicit systematic method for the scientific study of society had in it too little philosophical sophistication to command full support. Some of his psychological assumptions now seem jejune. The theory of social systems, as he put it forward, presented a static frame with no proper allowance for change. At its worst, his systematization sometimes gave the impression of an artificial construction dangerously akin to playing with words. It was as if he saw men as social counters in a cosmic game, each personality a bundle of social relations with other personalities. But granted all this, the magnitude and inspiration of his achievement stands firm. In retrospect, what is also impressive is his single-minded devotion to his subject. In early life he seems to have read widely, and Shelley, Keats, Gide, were among his favourites. As the years went by, he seemed to narrow his literary interests and to read little outside his immediate professional sphere. When he was in hospital a year or so before he died, I asked him if I could bring him books. He replied that all he wished to read was new theoretical ideas in social anthropology.

In the decade before his death he had come to be recognized as the outstanding leader in British social anthropology. Of his various professional distinctions, including Membership of the Royal Academy of Science at Amsterdam, Honorary Membership of the New York Academy of Sciences, and Fellowship of the British Academy, that which probably gave him as much pleasure as any was his election, at the foundation of the organization, as President of the (British) Association of Social Anthropologists. It was at the Association's meetings above all that he had around him members of the profession which he himself had done so much to create and name.

RAYMOND FIRTH