

NOTES AND QUERIES AND SOCIAL INTERRELATIONS:  
AN ASPECT OF THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

*Notes and Queries*, in its various editions, is a convenient source for tracing aspects of the history of social anthropology. In the first part of this paper I discuss its importance and usefulness as a historical source. In the second part I attempt to trace the changing emphasis on social interrelations, that is, relations between peoples, as a topic in social anthropology as reflected in its various editions. Anthropological interest in social interrelations is shown to have been quite marked in the nineteenth century and to have reached a peak in the early years of this century.<sup>1</sup> With the rise of functionalism, however, social interrelations all but disappeared from view as an anthropological topic. To help illustrate this account of an aspect of the history of social anthropology, the discussion is widened in Part 3 to consider aspects of two classic 'British' ethnographies of the 1920s and 1930s, Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and Firth's *We, The Tikopia* (1936) in the light of the discussion in Part 2.

1. Notes and Queries and Social Anthropology

It is perhaps somewhat difficult for anthropologists today to appreciate the importance that *Notes and Queries* formerly had.

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<sup>1</sup> This is perhaps exemplified by the publication in 1910 of G.C. Wheeler's study of *The Tribe, and Intertribal Relations in Australia*, hailed by Westermarck, in his prefatory note to it, as the first study of inter-tribal relations among uncivilized peoples (1910: vi).

Leading contemporary anthropologists contributed to its various editions: for example, Tylor to the first, second and third; Rivers to the fourth; Haddon, Marett and Schapera to the fifth; and Radcliffe-Brown, Daryll Forde, Fortes, Leach and Nadel to the sixth. Some of its role and influence in the development and promotion of anthropology can be gained from Urry's (1972) article on its place in the development of field methods.

*Notes and Queries* was also used by many important and influential anthropologists, both professional and amateur. For example, A.C. Haddon published the results of his first researches in the Torres Straits according to the order of sections of what he called 'that invaluable little book', that is, the first edition of *Notes and Queries* (Haddon 1890: 300 and *passim*; see also Stocking 1983: 75). E.H. Man used the same volume in his researches in the Andaman Islands and wrote in praise of it in the preface to his book ([1885] 1932: ix-x):

Having thus acquired a colloquial knowledge of the ... language, I proceeded to collect as much information as possible in respect to the habits and customs of these savages.... In this interesting task I was greatly assisted by the excellent Manual of Anthropological Notes and Queries ... for I was thereby enabled to work on clearly defined lines.

The value of such systematic guidance as is afforded by this Manual can only be appreciated by those who have endeavoured to collect information from savages concerning the multifarious subjects possessing interest to ethnologists.

It seems as though Man's successor in the Andamans, Radcliffe-Brown, did not have a copy of the fourth (1912) edition while he was carrying out his Andaman researches - he was abroad when it was published. There is no evidence to suppose that he took an earlier edition with him. His copy of the fifth (1929) edition apparently shows little sign of its being used (Urry 1972: 56, n.19).

Malinowski, though he eventually 'dismissed the whole venture' (ibid.), certainly used *Notes and Queries* in his early researches. His first publication presenting field data, 'The Natives of Mailu' (1915), was divided into sections along the lines of the fourth edition, and he states in the introduction that he had directly followed its methods and advice on some matters (ibid.: 502; see Urry 1972: 52; Langham 1981: 173). Langham claims that Malinowski's diaries reveal that he relied 'heavily on the 1912 edition' (ibid.), while Urry quotes just one example from Malinowski's diary, for 31 October 1914, at Derabai on the Southern New Guinea mainland: 'Then I wrote my diary, and tried to synthesise my results, reviewing *Notes and Queries*.... Read some more N&Q and loaded my camera. Then I went into the village ...' (Urry 1972: 52; quoting Malinowski 1967: 30). The Seligmans made reference to the fifth edition when discussing kinship systems in their *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (1932: 28, n.1) and may well have taken the third and later the fourth editions with them on their expeditions to Southern Sudan in 1909-10, 1911-12 and 1921-2.

It seems as though Evans-Pritchard had one edition (probably

the fourth) with him in the field in Southern Sudan in the 1920s, though he was later very dismissive of its usefulness. His remarks that '*Notes and Queries* was certainly of little help to me' (1973a: 12, n.2) and that 'I never found *Notes and Queries* the help it was supposed to be' (1973b: 241) might well reflect a commonly held attitude amongst professional anthropologists of later generations, which had begun with the older Malinowski. However, even the sixth edition of 1951 received some remarkable praise in its reviews. In the non-anthropological *Journal of African Administration*, 'G.H.' stated that 'the present work is consistent with contemporary anthropological thought' (1952: 35) and that 'it brings together in one place the essence of anthropological study (ibid.: 36). H.S. Morris argued in the *British Journal of Sociology* that 'Whatever may be thought of the list of questions the mere fact of its having been made together with the traditional authority of *Notes and Queries* will make the book an essential piece of equipment to any intending field worker' (1952: 190). Fürer-Haimendorf (1952) commented that 'the new edition marks a most significant advance on all previous issues' and praised it as 'a most valuable handbook which will henceforth form an indispensable part of every field anthropologist's equipment'.<sup>2</sup>

Both Urry and Langham have used *Notes and Queries* in its various editions as a source for reviewing aspects of the history of anthropology. Urry has commented that 'the questions posed by Tylor and others reflected the concerns of their age' (1972: 47). The first four editions, Urry claims, clearly reflect 'the changing attitudes of anthropology, the alteration of fields of interest and the increase in the range of material considered to constitute ethnographic facts' (ibid.: 45); they are a source on, among other things, 'developments and changes of opinion in anthropology. They reflect in their contents and in the type of question asked, the aims and ideas of those who contributed them: the minds of the "leading minds of the age" are encapsulated in a few hundred pages' (ibid.: 54). For Langham the fourth (1912) edition 'accurately reflects the theoretical climate of the day' (1981: xix): he claims that

As can be verified through the more lengthy process of perusing the relevant contemporary journals, the first three editions of

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<sup>2</sup> American anthropologists were more critical and, in the light of the argument of this paper, Vogt's comments (1954: 1156) in particular are revealing of differences between British and North American anthropology at the time:

... there is virtually nothing on culture contact and change, diffusion, nativistic movements, etc. These aspects of modern field situations are not only difficult to avoid in a well-rounded study, but their exclusion appears to eliminate one of the most fruitful areas for the study of cultural dynamics and change. The whole stress upon static unchanging structures in native cultures is undoubtedly the most disturbing aspect of the book.

*Notes and Queries* ... provide a reasonably sensitive barometer of British anthropological thought during the final quarter of the nineteenth century (ibid.: 9).

And he later claims that

... the seminal year for the discipline was not 1922, when *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* and *The Andaman Islanders* were published. Rather it was 1912, when the fourth edition of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* appeared ... in which Rivers gave the first clear statement of what later came to be identified as the procedural and theoretical basis of British Social Anthropology (ibid.: 327).

While both Urry and Langham were interested in different aspects of the history of social anthropology from that with which I am concerned here, their comments help establish the validity of reviewing the history of the subject - at least in its earlier years: I should argue until some time after the publication of the fifth edition of 1929 - through an examination of the various editions of *Notes and Queries*. It was, though, only one of a variety of such compendiums. Frazer's editions of his own *Questions*, for example, might well have been more influential in certain circles (Frazer 1889; 1916). I deal almost exclusively with *Notes and Queries* here for reasons of space and simplicity, and because of its continued appearance in various editions throughout the period with which we are concerned.

## 2. *Social Interrelations in Notes and Queries*

There have been six editions of *Notes and Queries*, the first being published by the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) in 1874, and the sixth by the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) in 1951 (BAAS 1874; [RAI] 1892; BAAS 1899; BAAS 1929; RAI 1951).<sup>3</sup> This review starts, however, somewhat earlier with the publication by the BAAS in 1841 of a precursor to *Notes and Queries*, viz. a fourteen-page pamphlet with 89 numbered paragraphs entitled *Queries Respecting the Human Race to be Addressed to Travellers and Others* (BAAS 1841).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> More recently, Spanish and Portuguese translations of *Notes and Queries* have appeared. This suggests that it is still influential in anthropology, if no longer in British social anthropology (RAI [1951] 1966; [1951] 1971).

<sup>4</sup> There have been a number of such questionnaires and compendiums published by both institutions and individuals and a fuller study could take these into account. For an example even earlier than

Here, questions are posed concerning 'Physical Characters', 'Language', 'Individual and Family Life', 'Buildings and Monuments', 'Works of Art', 'Domestic Animals', 'Government and Laws', 'Geography and Statistics', 'Social Relations' and 'Religion, Superstitions, &c.'. Paragraphs 11 and 12, under 'Physical Characters', refer to the mixture of races, and paragraph 16, under 'Language', refers to the congruence, or otherwise, between language and race; paragraphs 51 and 53, under 'Buildings and Monuments' and 'Works of Art' respectively, refer to possible predecessors of contemporary inhabitants. All of these questions are of relevance to the study of social interrelations between peoples but of greater significance are some of the questions asked under the final three headings. Paragraph 71, under 'Geography and Statistics', refers to war and emigration and to the possibility of population increase being due 'to any course tending to bring accessions from other quarters'. The respondent to these queries is asked to state, 'whether such causes are long standing or recent'. Following on from these concerns, paragraph 72 (under the same heading) asks, 'Is the population generally living in a manner to which they have long been accustomed, or have new relations with other people, and consequently new customs and practices, been introduced'. Under 'Religion, Superstitions &c.' connected questions are asked: in paragraph 82: 'Is the religion of the people similar to that of any other people, neighbouring or remote? If different, are they widely so, or dependent upon particular modifications, and of what kind?'; and, most interestingly, in the following paragraph, 'In what light do they regard the religion and deities of neighbouring tribes?'

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*Queries* see Degérando's *The Observation of Savage Peoples* ([1800] 1969). Moore's (1969) introduction to his translation of Degérando's work discusses similar ventures. For other, Africanist, examples see under note 7 below (p. 261).

A history of such works from Degérando to the present would make a fascinating study in its own right. The fact that no seventh (structuralist ?) edition of *Notes and Queries* has been published would have to be explained and a wider range of material could be taken into account: the sections on 'Anthropology' in the various editions of the Royal Geographical Society's *Hints to Travellers* (RGS 1921) (see for example Tylor's section in the tenth edition [Tylor 1921] and Franks's 'Queries on Anthropology' [Franks 1921] in the same volume), anthropology text-books, introductions to the subject and the ASA's new series of publications on Research Methods in Social Anthropology (e.g. Barnard and Good 1984). Questions of the professionalisation of anthropology and its relations with, and attitudes to, other disciplines as well as 'travellers' could also be addressed. By 1921 Marett felt able to say (in a brief note to the reprinting of Tylor's section on 'Anthropology' in *Hints to Travellers* that, 'Unless ... he [the traveller] is prepared to discard superficial modes of observation and devote himself to a critical and intensive study of the available facts, he had much better leave the subject alone. It will help greatly if has been through a course of special training, such as several of the leading Universities can nowadays provide' (Marett 1921).

From the above it can be seen that the compilers of these *Queries*, while focusing on individual peoples, were much interested in the historical and contemporary relations between them; the last question noted above seems particularly modern, though it might be surmised that it was chosen with a view to assessing how amenable the people might be to the efforts of missionaries, rather than out of any anthropological concern with such matters as closed and open belief systems. Most of the questions in this and other such guides were no doubt inspired by more than purely scientific interests, for as well as the plain desire for knowledge there were colonial, commercial and proselytical factors at play. The questions in *Queries* were very relevant for a colonial and missionising power such as Britain was at the time. Knowledge concerning relations between indigenous peoples was vital for subjugating them and establishing the Pax Britannica, as well as for the successful introduction of foreign religious notions.

What is most remarkable, however, is the type of question asked under the heading 'Social Relations', for here the compilers are not concerned with social relations in the modern sense of relations *within* the society, but with those, as it were, *without* the society; that is, relations between societies, inter-social rather than intra-social - 'societal' relations perhaps. These *Queries* pre-date the study of 'sociology', and even the first use of the English term itself by two years, and are little concerned with social relations as we would understand them today, being more concerned with social institutions and customs than with social structure. In their pre-sociological innocence of the potential for the 'scientific' analysis of social relations within a society, the compilers emphasise external social relations.

I shall quote in full the two paragraphs under 'Social Relations' (BAAS 1841: paragraphs 75 and 76):

What kind of relationship, by written treaty or otherwise, subsists between the nation and other nations, civilized or not? Have they any intercourse by sea with other countries? Do any of them understand any European language? Or are there interpreters, by whom they can communicate with them?

Are they peaceable, or addicted to war? Have they any forms of declaring war or making peace? What is their mode of warfare, either by sea or land? [T]heir weapons and strategy? What do they do with the slain, and with prisoners? Have they any mode of communicating victories by monuments, hieroglyphics, or preservation of individual trophies, and of what kind? Have they any national poems, sagas, or traditions respecting their origin and history? Where Europeans have introduced fire-arms, ascertain the modes of warfare which have given place to them.

State whatever particulars respecting their origin and history are derived, either from tradition among themselves or from other sources.

The first edition of *Notes and Queries* itself was published in 1874, before the establishment of 'social anthropology' as an

academic discipline - and well before the establishment of fieldwork as anthropology's hallmark, as the full title of the first edition reveals: *Notes and Queries on Anthropology for the Use of Travellers and Residents in Uncivilized Lands* (BAAS 1874). The volume has three parts: 'Constitution of Man', 'Culture', and 'Miscellaneous'. In part I (Section XV) there is some concern with 'crosses', that is, the progeny of parents of different 'races', and in Part II a number of sections are concerned to some extent with relations between the people being studied and other peoples. For example, in Section XVIII ('History') the question is asked, 'What account do they give of themselves, and their connexions with other nations, wars, alliances, &c?'. In Section XV ('Etymology') there are questions about previous inhabitants, and in Section XXVIII ('Morals') questions comparing the people being studied with others. In Section XXXVI 'Customs' the traveller is asked, 'What are the rules of hospitality as recognized between kinsfolk, neighbours, strangers, and enemies?' Section XXXIX consists in questions on 'Trade'. Section XXX on 'Religion, Fetishes &c' includes, under a sub-section entitled 'Polytheism and Monotheism', the somewhat familiar questions: 'Do any deities seem borrowed, in name or character, from the religions of other nations' and 'Are the gods of other nations recognised as being real and powerful' (see above p. 259). Under the section on war the question is asked: 'How are the hunting-grounds arranged between the neighbouring tribes?' (p. 79).

In 'Miscellaneous' there is a section concerned with 'Contact with Civilized Races', but none dealing solely with relations between peoples.<sup>5</sup> This is not seen as a separate subject as it was in *Queries*, though a number of questions are addressed to such concerns, as has been seen above. Relations between peoples are of interest to the compilers but they do not form a topic, these being the dimensions of 'Culture'.<sup>6</sup>

The second and third editions are not much different from the first; Urry writes that they 'might easily be taken together as the 1899 edition is almost a reprint of the earlier one' (1972: 48). The questions they ask are more or less the same. It should be noted, however, that reference in the title to 'Travellers and Residents in Uncivilized Lands' has gone: we are now just offered *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*. Part II is now 'Ethnography', rather than 'Culture', and 'Contact with Civilised Races' is included under it, instead of being classified as 'Miscellaneous'.

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<sup>5</sup> While recognising that there is no ontological difference between social relations between one indigenous people and another and relations between an indigenous people and a colonial or other dominant people, I do not discuss the latter, 'Contact with Civilized Races', directly in this article.

<sup>6</sup> The section (XLIX) entitled 'Social Relations' is one of those which, as the editors warn in their introduction (p. iv), is incomplete and only consists in headings: 'Including family life; treatment of women, children, &c' (p. 85; cf. Urry 1972: 47). In Haddon's article on the Torres Straits Islanders, under 'Social Relations' the reader is merely told to 'see *Marriage* &c' (Haddon 1890: 355).

With the fourth edition of 1912, however, we are presented amongst other changes, with two new sections: 'External Relations Between Communities' and 'Adopted Elements in Culture: Importation, Imitation, Teaching'.<sup>7</sup> Both these sections I quote here at length, though omitting from the latter the discussion of European influence. The old Part II having been divided into three parts - 'Technology', 'Sociology' and 'Arts and Sciences' - these two sections appear as the last sections of the latter two parts respectively.

The section entitled 'External Relations Between Communities' reads as follows:

Though the simpler communities satisfy most of their needs by their own efforts, few, if any, altogether avoid intercourse with strangers; and most peoples have a fairly wide range of habitual contact with their neighbours. The commonest relations between distinct communities result either from the desire to co-operate, by the interchange of information, personal assistance, or commodities; or else from injuries inflicted either knowingly, or by chance, by one community or individual on another; and from the attempts of the injured party to obtain reparation or protection.

*Intercourse.* The simplest requisite is provision for intercourse. How are *strangers* treated? [O]n what conditions and with what precautions are they allowed to approach or enter the territory, cultivated lands, or settlements? Are there rules of *hospitality*, or any ceremonies by which a stranger can secure admittance, protection, or maintenance? Once admitted, has the stranger acquired permanent *guest-right*? Is any form of *guest-right* hereditary? Is it reciprocal, if the host afterwards visits the home of his guest? Can *guest-right* once

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<sup>7</sup> The period in which the fourth edition of *Notes and Queries* was published was perhaps the heyday of such questionnaires and compendiums. To take a specifically Africanist example which could be usefully compared with *Notes and Queries*, Foucart's *Introductory Questions on African Ethnology* was published by the Sultanieh Geographic Society of Cairo in 1919. For a section on 'Relations of the Social Unit with Strangers', see Foucart 1919: 99-101; for an example of an 'ethnography' organised according to Foucart's questions, see Hillelson's compilation of information on the Latuka (1923).

Slightly earlier, Professor Halkin had prepared a list of questions at the request of the Société belge de sociologie. These formed the basis for the *Collection de monographies ethnographiques* published under the auspices of Cyr. Van Overbergh of the Belgian Ministry of Sciences and Arts. An interesting aspect of these monographs was that the material for each section was published on a separate sheet or sheets which, being perforated, could be removed and reorganised according to topic. For an example of such a monograph, see Vanden Plas's study of the Kuku (1910a); he published the same material in a more literary form in *La Revue congolaise* (1910b).



acquired be suspended or forfeited? If so, for what causes? Is guest-right a private or personal affair between individuals or social groups? [O]r is there any public guest-right? Is any public authority charged with the reception of strangers? Are there public guest-houses? If so, how are they are maintained? [A]nd by whom?

*Messages.* How are information, requests, complaints, or other public messages transmitted from one community to another? Describe all provision for the dispatch, transmission, and reception of envoys, giving actual instances if possible. Are there regular interpreters, or any common code of signs understood by persons of different speech (v. *Signalling ... and Writing ...*)?

How are disputes between members of distinct communities adjusted? Describe all forms of court, or other authorities charged with such negotiation. Can a stranger appeal to them in his own person, or must he appeal through his host or other duly qualified person?

For customs relating to the interchange of commodities v. *Trade ...*; for the settlement of disputes by an appeal to force, v. *Warfare ....* (BAAS 1912: 179-80)

The section entitled 'Adopted Elements in Culture: Importation, Imitation, Teaching' reads as follows:

Probably no ethnic groups are so entirely isolated as to have adopted nothing even in recent times from their neighbours. Manufactured objects and natural products, especially such as are small, valuable and rare, pass from tribe to tribe, often over great distances, by way of gift, plunder or trade. Iron, salt, narcotics sometimes make regular trade-routes or lead to migrations. Travellers bring stories, songs, religious rites. Foreigners are brought into the tribe by marriage, war, slavery, and adoption. Two migrating peoples may settle in the same district, and tribes may be conquered and their lands occupied by other tribes.

In all these cases the native customs, language, and ways of thought are modified in various degrees. Material objects, food and narcotics, ornaments, diseases, stories, songs and dances, even religious cults, and a number of words connected with them, may pass from one people to another, with very little admixture of peoples or of the fundamental elements of their culture. But a much longer and more thorough process of intercourse and blending is needed to change the structure of the language, or to modify the social structure - the native organisation of kinship, clanship, marriage, land-tenure....

To study these *adopted elements in culture* is both important and difficult. Suppose that the observer sees in one island, A, a basket exactly like one that he has seen in another island, B; he may find by enquiry that the basket was actually *imported* from B, lately, or long ago; or, this specimen was made in A, but in *imitation* of baskets imported from B; or, the art of making it was *taught* by visitors from B to A, or by natives of

A who visited B and returned. Or possibly A is the original home of the art, and the baskets seen in B were *imports* or *imitations* or the result of *teaching*.

A dance and the apparatus for it may have been *imitated* from the performances of other tribes, or *taught* by visitors or returned travellers. It may be of native invention but *suggested* by the sight of foreigners and their behaviour. The right to perform the dance and the necessary ornaments may have been bought, given, acquired by marriage, captured in war. A religious cult may have been introduced in any one of these ways, or there may have been a proselytising mission. Foreign words may come by neighbourhood, intermarriage, trade, war, or other means.

By enquiring exactly into these matters, the observer is sure to open up good lines of enquiry into the native way of living, social structure, religious and artistic history. But it is easy to leap to false conclusions. If a peculiar custom of inheritance is found in two tribes, it is not enough to guess that one has adopted it from another. To change part of the social organization is not so simple as to buy a basket or song; other changes would take place along with it, or in consequence, and these must be investigated as evidence for the change. Nor do people adopt new customs unless something already existing in their own culture makes the innovation easy and congenial, or some change of circumstances makes the change necessary. If they adopt a new food, perhaps there was a decided want of that element in their food-supply, perhaps their old food-supply has been suddenly cut off; if they alter their customs of marriage, it may be that the proportion of men to women has been lately altered. The conditions of intercourse, past and present, between the two peoples must be studied. Similarity of customs may come from similarity of conditions, and not by adoption or imitation at all. (*ibid.*: 263-6)

We can see how in 'External Relations Between Communities', reference is made to other sections where specific topics are dealt with, as in previous editions; what is remarkable, then, is how a section has been devoted to the topic of 'External Relations'. In the section of 'Adopted Elements in Culutre' there is a sophisticated set of ideas concerning the adoption of culture which classifies it into 'importation', 'imitation' and 'teaching'. Such adoption is presented as occurring in the normal run of things as a result of the influence of visitors, or travellers, or of war, intermarriage, or trade - or even, at least in the case of 'foreign words', through the mere fact of neighbourhood.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Major C.H. Stigand's (1923: 151-2) discussion of such questions, based on his experiences as Governor of Mongalla Province in Southern Sudan, is perhaps more sophisticated than that given in *Notes and Queries* - it is certainly more complicated:

Ethnography allows the past to be explored to a certain extent, racial differences and characteristics cannot be assumed or

When the fifth edition was published in 1929, the amount of attention paid to relations between peoples had decreased. The section on 'External Relations Between Communities' had been excised and, interestingly, that on 'Adopted Elements in Culture' was reorganised from a position of equivalence, as a section in its own right *vis-à-vis* 'A General Account of Method', 'Life-History of the Individual in Society', 'Social Organization' and 'Economics of the Social Group', to a sub-section of 'Method' along with 'Treatment of Witnesses' and 'The Genealogical Method'. It was thus not included in the reordered Part II, 'Cultural Anthropology, Sociology', with its sub-sections on 'Material Culture', 'Arts and Sciences', 'Nature Lore', 'Language' and 'Archaeology'. This can be taken to reflect a lessening of interest in contact and relations between peoples and an increase in interest in the functioning of social systems without reference to their neighbours or any other possible influence. Making 'Adopted Elements in Culture' a sub-section of 'Method', rather than a section of anthropological study in its own right, implies a desire to analyse out such material while leaving behind what is thought to be the proper stuff of anthropological study.

The editors of the fifth edition made the following plea when discussing the influence of *European* contact in the section under discussion: 'Naturally, the observer must record all that survives

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discarded, like putting on and off a suit of clothes. When, however, one comes to consider customs, it is altogether a different matter; these may be adopted, or abandoned, in a comparatively short space of time. The practice of exogamy encourages their spread far and wide. For instance, there may be a tribe A conterminous with a tribe B, and another tribe C, living next to B on the side remote from A. A woman of A tribe marries a man of B tribe across the border. On her husband's death, his brother, who lives near the opposite border of B near C, comes to claim her and takes her to live with him. While living there her daughter marries into C tribe and carries with her certain customs of A taught her by her mother. A traveller may observe some of these customs whilst passing through C, inquire whether they are practised in B, and find that they are not, and then proceeding to A notice that they are in general use. He might come to the conclusion that this showed that A and C were more closely related than A and B, or B and C. He might even, if so inclined, build up a theory of a former tribe which occupied the country from A to C, till B, coming from elsewhere, drove a wedge in and separated the old AC tribe into two portions.

Again a custom introduced in this way from A to C may be a superstitious one, and the first time it is practised amongst C may meet with great success - someone may make a remarkable recovery which is attributed to the A charm or medicine. It may thus be adopted immediately by a great number of C tribe, whence it may be carried on to D and F, and not to E, and so on.

The above is given only as an example to show that too much importance must not be attributed to the similarity of custom.

of the old native life; but he must show it in its modern setting, and with all its European trappings' (BAAS 1929: 40). However, this plea was merely an amended version of a similar one in the edition of 1912 in which the idea was expressed as follows: 'Naturally, the observer must record all that survives of the old native life; but he must show it in its modern setting. We want the truth and the whole truth' (BAAS 1912: 266). Here there is no mention of 'trappings'. Is it too much to see the 1912 version as having a much more modern approach to 'acculturation', wanting to see cultures in historical process - 'the truth and the whole truth' - whereas the 1929 edition can see modern contacts only as providing 'ornaments; dress; embellishments; external, superficial, and trifling decoration' (*OED*)? If the authors of the 1929 edition viewed the immense influence of European 'contact' on other cultures as mere embellishment, it is hardly surprising that they chose to ignore the importance of the influence of other cultures on each other. Urry fails to notice the major changes from the fourth to the fifth editions that I have identified. He merely claims: 'The 1929 edition was only slightly altered with some new sections on economics and law' (1972: 56, n.18).

With the sixth edition, this trend towards the analysis of societies as isolable units was reinforced. Though relations between societies are touched upon in the sections on 'Warfare' (RAI 1951: 141-4), 'Exchange' (*ibid.*: 169-71) and so on, the concern is with customs regulating the functioning of mutually coexisting social systems. There is, in fact, a section on 'Inter-Group Relations' but it will be seen that though this implies a recognition of social relations between groups and even of overarching units for analysis, particularly in the case of 'common religion', the amount of space devoted to such relations - less than two pages out of three hundred concerned with social anthropological material - reflects the lack of importance attached to them in British social anthropology of the functionalist and structural-functionalist 'schools'. I quote the section on 'Inter-Group Relations' in full:

In simpler societies the political unit is normally the widest effective social group. Within this group the customary rights and obligations of members are enforceable through the medium of a regular system of settling disputes and correcting wrongs. Any non-member of this group is a potential enemy, not protected by established sanctions. But this strict limitation is often set aside, enabling regular peaceful relationships with other groups to be maintained. These relationships may be:

(a) Non-political, e.g. trade or intermarriage. It must be investigated how these relationships are made possible in the absence of a common body of customary law.

(b) There are also unregulated interrelationships in the political field. These take the form of pacts and treaties between political groups, regulating warfare, reconciliation after feuds, and the exchange or ransom of prisoners (*v. below*, Warfare). Through such pacts unrestricted vengeance, such as often obtains between independent political groups, may be replaced by blood-money (*v. Law*) or other obligations of redress,

and the individual acting in disregard of the pact would forfeit the support of his group and be subject to legal or ritual penalties, e.g. outlawry (v. Law). In some societies inviolable go-betweens are entrusted with inter-group negotiations. Among nomadic peoples periodical meetings occur, sometimes taking the form of religious ceremonies, at which outstanding disputes are settled (over blood-money, boundaries, grazing or watering rights). The custom of blood brotherhood is a common device by which people are enabled to visit or traverse the territory of potentially hostile neighbours. Incidence of blood brotherhood and the ritual associated with it should be described in detail. Kinship ties that run across tribal or clan boundaries may fulfil the same purpose (v. Kinship).

(c) In certain societies a common religion creates a community wider than the regular political groups. This is found both amongst very primitive peoples such as the Australian aborigines and amongst more developed peoples, e.g. where Islam has penetrated. (RAI 1951: 135-6)

### 3. *Insular Ethnographies*

The interest in relations between peoples which can be traced through *Queries* and the various earlier editions of *Notes and Queries* gave way by the time of the publication of the fifth edition in 1929 to the overpowering influence of functionalism. Societies and cultures were now to be seen as in theory isolable and therefore as in fact isolated units for analysis. With the abandonment of diffusionism as an acceptable organising theory for anthropological research there was no intellectual foundation for the study of relations between peoples. Questions concerning them, which might be mentioned in passing if they could not be ignored, were now no more than secondary. What perhaps had its origins in the commercial and proselytising interests of European imperial powers gave way to the detached scientific analysis of self-contained units. Questions concerning relations between peoples had never been organised in an intellectually satisfying way - nor, indeed, from a modern perspective, had other anthropological questions - so in the face of the appearance of the then intellectually satisfying functionalism, the disorganised 'External Relations Between Communities' gave way.

This is perhaps a too familiar story, and in some ways it smacks of conventional wisdom ready for disproof - though it does not suit my present purpose to disprove it. But it is not easily to be denied that the defining influence of Malinowskian functionalism, as practised by himself and his students, had a massive effect on the subject of social anthropology in terms of both theory and practice. The functionalist concentration on the interrelatedness of social institutions, as well as the underlying biological - and mechanical (Freedman 1979: 73) - analogy, were bound to lead to almost exclusive attention to tribes, nations, peoples and ethnic groups as isolable units. No doubt this was necessary for the

developments in anthropology that functionalism and structural-functionalism brought about. Boundaries have to be drawn somewhere, the conventional view has it, for analysis to take place, and they are bound to be more or less arbitrary (*ibid.*: 74). Fieldwork by definition requires a long stay in one community and is therefore likely to lead to accounts of peoples as units, where the field-worker's knowledge of one, two or three communities, can be taken as representative of the people, tribe, nation or ethnic group, as a whole.

It is probably not irrelevant that so many of the classic monographs of the 1920s and 1930s, in the defining period of social anthropology, should have been of island peoples - and often studied by anthropologists who were themselves islanders by birth, Firth for example. One could even argue that it is of relevance that all British anthropologists are by definition islanders. In Malinowski's case, however, it would have to be argued that it was the stark contrast between the island communities where he did his early fieldwork and his experiences as a young man of living in the great landmass of Central Europe with its lack of clear-cut, natural geographical divisions there, which encouraged his functionalist view of 'savage' society.

One of the best examples of such work is Firth's classic monograph *We, The Tikopia* (1936), which presents an island people (in his preface, Malinowski refers to Tikopia as 'his [Firth's] little island' [1936: vii]) more or less as they were before the external influences of the contemporary era. The book is, to a marked extent, a reconstruction of traditional Tikopian society and culture with the 'trappings' presented and discussed but analysed out. Firth does not deny the effects of missions etc., but argues that 'the social structure has remained comparatively unchanged (*ibid.*: 38), and he devotes attention to the process of inculturation through which elements of white man's culture have been integrated into the context of Tikopia culture without changing its form. It is with this aspect of his study that Firth admits to some dissatisfaction, saying that if he were able to return to Tikopia he would devote more attention to the 'study of contact of cultures', for example, 'the influence of Christianity on family cohesion' (*ibid.*: xxii), which, of course, he later did, publishing the results in his *Social Change in Tikopia* (1959).

Just as Firth does not ignore the influence of 'the white man' so also he does not deny the contact between Tikopia and other indigenous island peoples; but this is underemphasised in comparison with his stress on their isolation: 'It is hard for anyone who has not actually lived on the island to realize its isolation from the rest of the world' (*ibid.*: 19). After giving us a brilliantly evocative description of the landscape in which the Tikopia live he tells us that 'In this state of isolation from the outer world, in a home of great natural beauty, adequate in the staple materials for a simple but comfortable existence, the Tikopia have shaped their lives' (*ibid.*: 30). And of the horizon as seen from Tumuaki, Firth says it is 'like a cordon from which there is no escape' (*ibid.*: 25).

The Tikopia people live on the island of Tikopia and speak

Tikopia. They are presented as a self-contained and isolated unit, perfect for circumscription as a unit for anthropological study. This is not to say that Firth does not recognise that things are not quite like that. He refers to 'the ocean wanderings of the Tikopia themselves' (ibid.: 34) and calls them 'this sea-faring people' (ibid.: 28). The people of Vanikoro are mentioned as having made frequent visits to Tikopia, and dances are said to have been 'borrowed' and 'adapted' from elsewhere (ibid.: 34), but no more is made of these evidences of relations beyond the unit of analysis. It should also be noted that from Firth's account it seems as if the Tikopia had less contact with other islands at the time he visited them than was the case before; he himself tells us that they do not any more make trips to Anuta, the nearest island (ibid.: 20).

It might be thought easy to challenge this account of the development of anthropology if only by pointing to one of the greatest of all functionalist monographs, Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), with its wealth of information concerning the *kula* - the complex inter-island trading system. This account of trade beyond the unit of study does not, however, seem to have encouraged such studies elsewhere. It might be said that this is because of the lack of such 'inter-group' institutions elsewhere; but I think there is another, more important, reason.

While Malinowski described *kula* events with his customary wealth of detail, he in fact failed to treat the relations between the peoples involved in the *kula* ring. Evans-Pritchard's criticisms (1981: 198) are cogent:

... we are told nothing of the political interrelations of the communities concerned in the *kula* and nothing of the kinship system ... even the essential facts about the *kula* itself are omitted. He does not tell us who traded with whom; we are not told the interrelationships of the persons composing the villages which take part in the *kula*; and so forth.

Evans-Pritchard blames these omissions on Malinowski's having 'no idea of abstract analysis' (ibid.); Gluckman and Cunnison seem to place the blame on the weakness of the contemporary anthropological theory concerning politics, as well as Malinowski's lack of interest in this subject (1962: vi). It is surely also the case that in his Trobriand researches Malinowski was not concerned to study relations between peoples.

The index to *Argonauts* has only one reference to 'intertribal relations': 'Intertribal relations, how news spreads in' (ibid.: 522). In the few pages referred to (ibid.: 379-82), Malinowski remarks on how surprisingly fast news spreads (a characteristic of representations of the 'primitive' frequently found in novels and films):

It was astonishing to hear all this news, arriving at a small island, apparently completely isolated with its tiny population within these savage and little navigated seas; news only a few days old, yet reporting events which had occurred at a travelling distance of some hundred miles. (ibid.: 380)

Malinowski charts how such communication is achieved in a particular instance and concludes that 'In olden days, not less than now, there must have been an ebullition [*sic*] in the inter-tribal relations, and a great stirring from one place to another, whenever an *uwalaku* Kula was afoot' (ibid.). The hints he gives at the complex organisation underlying the Kula are offset by his choice of language - 'ebullition' implies some unconscious, instinctual, random process; and his earlier references to 'savage and little navigated seas' conflict with his charting of how frequently these seas are crossed. It is almost as if functionalism, while able to comprehend and analyse the complexities of individual societies, could not cope with social relations beyond the defined unit of study. It was these relations beyond the unit which Uberoi has proposed, in his *Politics of the Kula Ring* (1962), underlie the *kula*.

### *Concluding Remarks*

It is not possible in a short paper to do justice to the complexities of more than a century of the intellectual history of an academic discipline. Nevertheless, this review may help to illustrate how anthropology came to ignore an aspect of social reality which had at one time been considered of great importance. The emphasis on studying a people, a society, a tribe, has, I should argue, distorted anthropology's picture of the social reality which it takes to be its subject-matter. Why this happened, and why recently anthropologists are again finding social interrelations interesting and important, are questions I hope to be able to take up elsewhere.

We may assume that anthropologists, at all times, have tried to describe and account for the social reality which they have studied. At all times they have been constrained in their attempts by underlying ideas about the nature of such reality, about the models appropriate for describing and explaining it and so on. Such an exercise as that conducted here helps to illustrate the effects of these underlying ideas. In this particular case the abstracting of a unit for social analysis has been shown to be subject to historical change; reality has been cut up in different ways, facts that do not fit the 'reality' have been underplayed where they have not been ignored.

Knowing how previous studies were limited by their arbitrary abstracting of social reality into convenient units for analysis does not necessarily make the process of delimiting a unit for analysis any less arbitrary. What it does perhaps do is help to contribute to the process whereby anthropology becomes more aware of its own development and of the recalcitrant nature of the social reality it attempts to study.

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